



# the Circle

Spring 1982, Vol. 9, Number 2





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Students who have submitted articles, poetry or short stories for this issue are invited to stop by *The Circle* office, room 353 in Foy Union, to pick up their submissions along with evaluation sheets. These evaluation sheets include criticism which should help students understand why their pieces were or were not published.

**Front Cover illustration**  
**by Betsy Burts**





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## ARTWORK

Dennis Causey, Betsy Burts, Pat Golden, Rob French, Rick Smith, Donna Waldrop, Patti Hudson, Robin Nance, Theresa Barnett, Lisa Harrison, Ed Deyo, Sharon Rasmusson, Val Roberts, Jo Covington

## A Note On Style

*The Circle*, Auburn's student interest magazine, serves as a forum for the writers and artists within the university community. It aims to appeal to a diverse Auburn audience by providing a variety of articles (either directly or indirectly related to campus) ranging from the sciences to the arts. Each *Circle* strives to be a thoughtful and well-designed publication presenting and preserving current Auburn interests and creativity.

The variety of approaches to writing and design in this issue reflects *The Circle's* function as a laboratory publication. Although each piece was reviewed by staff members and representatives of the editorial board, the appearance of any article, story, poem, drawing, or photograph does not necessarily indicate unanimous critical approval.

*The Circle* is a community publication financed through Student Activity Fees. The views expressed throughout the issue are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the publisher (the Board of Student Communications) or those of *The Circle* editorial board and staff. Address all correspondence to: *The Auburn Circle*, 353 Union Building, Auburn University, Alabama 36849. All letters to the editor are welcome.

*The Circle* staff wishes to thank all the students and faculty members who helped make this issue possible.



# "THE SOVIET UNION BLUES"

by Janis Antonek

*I spent the summer of 1981 in the Soviet Union as a participant in a government-sponsored exchange program. Other than a professional endeavor, this trip was a quest to see what life was like in the Soviet Union. All the comments in this essay reflect Soviet lifestyle as it appeared to me. Though some comments sound harsh and at times negative, none of my experiences were traumatic enough to keep me from wanting to return and none negate the experience as a whole.*

The Soviet Union is an overwhelmingly large country spanning two continents and eleven time zones. Unfortunately, I was limited to the European parts centered around Moscow and Leningrad. These cities, cultural, political and historical centers of the country, are ideal stopping spots for first-time visitors. These are the Russian parts of a country that is comprised of more than 100 ethnic groups. The "Russianness" of the experience began at the Moscow International Airport.

The entrance hall of the newest Moscow airport is a large gray marble vestibule, a sturdy, permanent structure, as opposed to the pre-fab appearance typical of entrance corridors in Western airports. Instead of the mass confusion found in Western airports, in Moscow every passenger is processed as an individual and waits his turn standing in line until a soldier behind a glass-plated booth has cleared his entry. If the traveller answers all ques-

tions without contradicting any of the printed information, and all his documents are in order, he may proceed to the baggage claim area. The ratio of airport employees and militia men to passengers appears to be 1:1. A Russian airport is definitely not conducive to loitering. There are no hotel lobbies, bars, gift shops or Hari Krishnas to be found.

My attention was quickly diverted from all the "newness" when I learned that my luggage had not arrived. Though I speak Russian, it was frustrating trying to explain my problem at the Lost Baggage Claim Area which, by the way, was not even open until rumor circulated that some "Amerikanka" had lost her luggage. Anyone who has even studied a foreign language should empathize with me, for nowhere in training does even the most advanced language student learn words like "soft-side luggage," "garment bag" or "make-up case." The generic word "suitcase" is sufficient for classroom purposes. After a challenging hour-and-a-half of struggling with my academic rather than practical Russian, I had to accept the fact that my luggage would never arrive.

Customs officials spend about fifteen minutes with each piece of luggage. Partly for reasons of security and mainly due to curiosity, they scrutinize any item that catches their attention. The girl in front of me at customs had a New York City, New-Wave appearance, and so they spent over thirty minutes inspecting her goods. They even called co-workers from other counters to look at the pictures in her magazines, listen to her taped music, open her

make-up and look at her clothes. She made no objections, knowing that they had the right to confiscate anything they deemed counter-productive to the State. After every page of her address book had been xeroxed, so it would be known who all of her Russian friends were, and after her wallet had been thoroughly searched, the girl was granted entry.

With the airport ritual behind, I could think only of getting some sleep. I lived in the dormitory at Moscow State University and did not have to stay in any of the buildings in the "foreigners-only" sections of Moscow. Soviet dormitory policy is progressive by American standards. The concept of "women only" sections does not exist. Men, women, and married couples with children live side by side on every floor. Alcohol is permitted in Soviet dorms. Once settled in my room and rested, I had to concentrate on replacing the goods that were in my missing suitcase. Armed with only my roubles and Moscow State University student ID in hand, I went out in the streets to see life as Soviets live it.

After a week of shopping, I resigned myself to the nightmare of spending the summer without my taken-for-granted American "luxuries." This meant no toilet paper, kleenex, deodorant, bubble-gum, feminine hygiene products, vitamin pills, razors, blue jeans, Crest toothpaste, rain slicker, make-up, Sanka, low-cal sweetener—the list is endless. The occasional Russian pro-





illustration by Dennis Causey



duct that I happened upon was always a poor replacement. State-brand toothpaste did not make my teeth feel clean. The toilet paper, even in the faculty lounge at the university, was cut-up squares of newspaper (print and all). The lipstick (at 6 roubles or around \$8 a tube) was as effective as that out of a Barbie doll make-up kit. I never did find a razor and so like a good Russian girl I let the hair on my legs grow. Besides, only a prostitute, borderline dissident or a foreigner would shave her legs. Nobody else used deodorant, why should I?

The cheapest dime-store quality dress costs about \$90 (70 roubles—compared to the average monthly salary of under 300 roubles). Since I could not afford to supplement my wardrobe, I wore the same dress several days in a row. Whereas in the United States we apologize for being caught in the same outfit on two consecutive days, this is a common practice in the Soviet Union. Since washing clothes had to be done by hand, I only had enough time on the weekends to wash. In order to conserve energy, for about two weeks every summer there is no hot water in Moscow. This means boiling water to wash clothes or to bathe. Rumor has it, there are intervals in Moscow where there is no water at all; conveniently, the American students are usually not in town during this time. By the end of the summer, I looked and felt quite Russian.

I quickly learned not to waste anything and that everything can be recycled. Consumer goods are in short supply and expensive. In the Soviet Union there is either an umbrella, shoe, or ball-point pen repair shop on every corner. Every bottle, even a jelly jar, has a deposit on it. The consumer always provides his own shopping bag and often his own containers for foods.

Grocery shopping was a cumbersome chore that made me feel as if every spare minute was spent in search of food. There are no Krogers or Super Foods where everything the consumer wants can be found under one roof. Bread is purchased at the bakery, meat

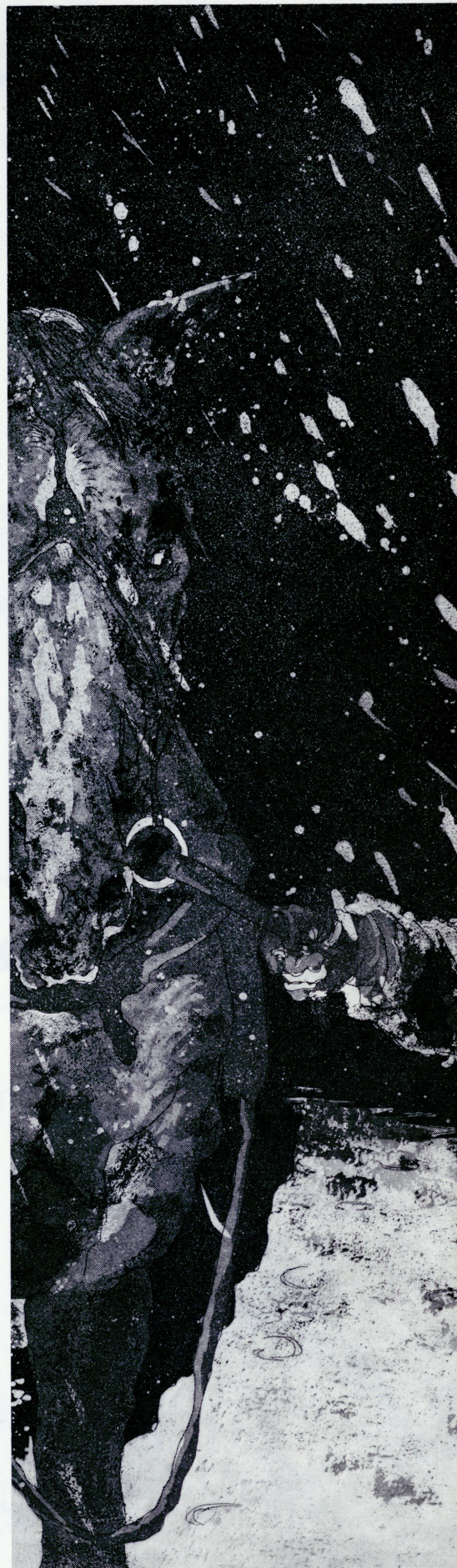
at the butcher shop, cheese at the dairy products store. There is a dry goods store. The closest American parallel to the Soviet dry goods store is the generic section at the American grocery store: no choice of brands, no price competition, no unique presentation or packaging, and a void of color. Under the neon sign "STORE" the Soviet consumer is free to buy any State-brand product he desires.

As the product of a capitalist society, I was more impressed with what was not available than with what was. There are no convenience foods or foods with preservatives. Since nothing is processed, every dish must be prepared from scratch. Not even self-rising flour is available to lighten the burden of the housewife or cook. There are no TV dinners, boxes of macaroni and cheese, or cans of soup.

Though the idea of having fresh produce exclusively sounds nice, even in the middle of the summer, I rarely found any fruit or vegetables. A can of fruit cocktail is as treasured in the Soviet Union as a jar of black caviar is in the United States. Russians have no concept of the American twenty-one-item salad. There are no condiments, which means no steak sauce or ketchup for spicing up a bland dish. Nothing is artificially sweetened, which means maximum calories in every bite. Diet soda is unknown. I resigned my taste buds to a diet of starch and fat and in eight weeks had gained ten pounds.

To collect enough food for a well-balanced meal took too much effort for me. I had no desire to fight the long queues at the food stores or to spend hours cooking in a communal kitchen. I usually opted for the student cafeterias or corner diners. On a busy day I would buy a few loaves of bread—the only minimal effort meal—and eat bread and cheese on my way to the metro stop.

Quenching my thirst also required effort. I quit drinking coffee since it was poured from the pot with cream and sugar—neither of which I use—already added. The waitresses could never understand why I got upset about the idea of the State deciding how I should drink my morning cup of coffee. This was a constant reminder that I was not in a capitalist society where the customer always gets what he wants. In the Soviet Union, if you don't buy some-







etching by Betsy Burts

thing, the next person in line will gladly make the purchase. I did not see one water fountain the entire trip. Soda machine lines always had at least thirty people in them on a warm day. This was partly due to the fact that the drink had to be consumed on the premises for there were no disposable paper cups; instead, one glass cup, which for some reason is never stolen, rests on the front ledge of the machine waiting for the next thirsty person to pick it up. Warm beer could be purchased on the streets for a few cents (copecks) and was consumed in the same manner, using the community cup. After acquiring enough food to survive, I could concentrate on meeting my neighbors back at the dorm.

To most Russians, living in a cubicle at the dorm is a pleasure, for it is their only chance to live in a private room. Four of the six private homes that I visited were communal apartments. At least two, usually three, generations share a one-room apartment. Having seen conditions improve since WWII, the older people generally do not complain about cramped living conditions. However, there is a "me" generation of younger Soviets that is very frustrated with the communal lifestyle.

A communal room is usually partitioned by makeshift bedspreads. Though I assume married couples sleep together, none of the six apartments I visited had any double beds. In fact, a bed usually functions as a couch during the day. Also, in the same room is the kitchen table, the refrigerator and every worldly possession of every occupant. The communal kitchen and bathroom are found at the end of the hall. As many as ten families share these common rooms. Though there will often be up to six stoves and sinks in the communal kitchen, there is almost never more than one toilet and shower in the bathroom. I, too, learned quickly to appreciate the privacy of a dorm room.

I ignorantly enjoyed this privacy until one day I found out that foreigners are only placed in rooms that have listening devices. I pounded the walls with my fist until I eventually heard the hollow thud where the microphone was planted. Though the accuracy of the ancient equipment is uncertain, there is the definite psychological impact of a student's knowing that his every word is

recorded that keeps him on his best behavior, at least while he is in his room. This, along with the fact that all of the phone lines around the university are bugged, forces private conversations to be conducted in unprivate places. On a park bench people are free to quietly discuss their radical beliefs.

Due to this lack of privacy, Russian couples are often forced to seek intimacy in public places. Lovers of all ages are constantly being scolded by little old ladies for necking at the bus and metro stops. One sunny day, while exploring a monastery, I noticed a young couple behind a pile of construction materials. I stood in disbelief as a young man stood, kissed his girlfriend, zipped his pants, and casually asked me if I had a match. Amazed, I threw him the whole box of matches. After lighting their cigarettes, they strolled out of the courtyard laughing, unconcerned that someone had witnessed their sexual interlude.

It is also in public places where black-market transactions generally take place. I received most offers to exchange money and sell blue jeans—the two most common requests—while walking along the main streets in front of the major hotels and while reading in the park. I worked hard at looking Russian in order to avoid these scenes but a professional black-marketeer can always tell who is foreign. The standard line is to approach the suspect by asking him what time it is. You either show him your watch and he notices it is foreign or you attempt to tell the time in Russian and even the most fluent foreigners cannot fool the pros—and often do not want to fool them. Though the transactions are profitable and usually only the Soviet citizen will be punished if caught, I did not take the risk. Instead, I bought a Soviet-made watch and had fun seeing the black-marketeers walk away confused as to my nationality. At \$200 a pair, I don't know if I could have resisted temptation had my Levi's not been in the missing suitcase. At the official exchange rate in the banks, a dollar will not even buy one rouble. On the black-market however, one dollar will yield at least three roubles.



Not all Russians who initiate conversations with foreigners are black-market dealers. Some are genuinely interested in developing friendships. One day on the way to the bus stop, I met an Armenian fellow who was fascinated by tales of life outside the Soviet Union and wanted to talk for hours about cultural differences. Though he never directly stated it, I suspected that he had plans to emigrate. We met every day at 4:00 p.m. in the park and would talk for hours about my life in the United States and then about his in the Soviet Union. I would tease him about arriving at 3:30 in anticipation of our 4:00 meetings. He just laughed and said that he didn't want to chance arriving late and not finding me. This continued for two weeks, and then one day he did not show. I called his apartment and there was never any answer. I could only think back to the story he had told me about how he once got in trouble for having a French friend. I suddenly understood why he would stop talking to me in the middle of a discussion and walk a few paces ahead. He continually thanked me for talking softly. He was being followed. I never saw Aram again. Soviet friends are easier to lose than they are to make.

Through conversations with Aram and other Soviet friends, I learned how Soviets spend their leisure time. To the Western visitor, night life in Moscow would prove extremely mundane. Most public places close at 8:00 p.m. A real Soviet bar, as opposed to one for tourists, is for men only. Both Soviets and visitors must apply for passes to leave the town they are registered in—even for a week-end.

There are virtually no drugs, and no real outlet for social criticism; therefore, alcohol abuse is a form of rebellion. When I asked my Russian friends why they drank so frequently and why they consumed such large quantities of liquor, they responded that it was their one way to get back at the system. It was not uncommon for me to see a drunk man or two passed out under a bush on my way home from town. Another common scene was an elderly woman helping an intoxicated young man, whom she probably did not know, stumble home. The more accepted idea of a "good time" is going out for ice-cream and champagne (served

together) with some friends from work, picking berries in the woods, or going to the movies on a Sunday afternoon. It is a world of PG movies because pornography and homosexuality are illegal. Neither are tolerated by the State as movie fantasy nor in everyday living. Examples of movies that are acceptable in the Soviet movie houses are "Murder on the Orient Express" and "The Stunt Man." "Murder on the Orient Express" was dubbed, which made it enjoyable to listen to. However, cheaper than dubbing a film is paying someone to stand at the back of the theater and shout the script in translation. This was the method employed in "The Stunt Man." This, along with the wooden benches used as seats, made a two-hour movie unbearable.

In a country without phone books, it is difficult to contact someone who has not given out his phone number and specifically asked to be called. Unlike Americans, Soviets do not leave the house at night with the hope of meeting new people and making friends. They tend to keep the same circle of friends, whether from high-school, work, or the apartment complex, through life. The exception to this is college students. The easiest and safest place for an American to meet Soviets is through the University. There were several spontaneous parties at our dorm during my visit. A Soviet student enjoys a good party with the same intensity as an American student. These informal gatherings are centered around food, spirits and lots of Western rock-and-roll. After several shots of vodka, when the ice is broken, someone brings out a guitar and starts reciting ballads. Subtle social protest is often suggested in ballad form.

When a group of Soviets and Americans mix, inevitably a political discussion will start. My experience with these conversations was exhausting. The Soviets wanted to know why Americans were so eager to go to war, how we could have been so stupid to have elected Reagan—a man who was another Hitler and would destroy our society—and how we could interfere in the affairs of other countries and feel no remorse. They were firmly convinced that we wanted a WWII and that we were about to start it. It angered me to learn that every bit of propaganda they

heard about the U.S. was accepted as truth. In a defensive tone I was told that Soviets did not want war, but if the Americans *made* them go to war, the Soviets would not lose. I knew that nothing I explained would make them feel any better towards our nation and its people. I only hoped that with kindness and patience I could show them just how human Americans are.

The summer did not end any too soon and for the last few days of the sojourn, my motto had been "Let me out." I had mentally left the Soviet Union long before actual departure. All I could concentrate on was a 21-item salad bar and a cup of black coffee, and I dreamed of taking a hot bath and putting on some machine-washed clothes. Yet, on the bus to the airport, I could not shed my melancholy. How could I miss a lifestyle that had been so hard for me to endure and a society that would never fully accept me? It had to be my sense of accomplishment that made the summer a rewarding experience. I had survived in a no-luxury, no-frills society that was the antithesis of my own.

Though I will never fully understand their society and political views, I do discern that, above being communists, Soviets are people with the same needs and instincts as Americans. Even the American who is totally repulsed by Soviet ideology should make a trip to the Soviet Union. Having another point of reference on how life is lived had a monumental impact on my understanding of what it means to be an American.









photograph by Donna Waldrop



# MIMOSA AND LAURELS

by Marian Motley

## Second Place Sigma Tau Delta Short Story Contest

The train had not even started moving when Marianne realized that the family seated behind her had begun unpacking a picnic lunch.

"What piece of chicken you want, Glender?," one called across the aisle to another.

"Me, I like the wing, but Rex, he won't eat nothing but breast of chicken."

"When I was a child, nobody asked me," the first voice answered.

Following the aroma of fried chicken came the smell of stuffed eggs and some discussion about baked sweet potatoes. Marianne tried to concentrate on the magazine she was reading, but was interrupted by a piece of caramel cake thrust within an inch of her face. She turned her head and slowly followed with her eyes an arm that had come across the back of her seat. The seat was high so that the face that belonged to the arm was hidden.

"Won't you eat some homemade caramel cake with us?," a chirping voice almost sang the question.

Marianne leaned around the seat to stare straight into the face of what must have been the grandmother of the group behind her. Her eyes quickly scanned the entire group—the old lady who wore a mauve cotton dress with rhinestone buttons; a middle-aged lady who had a beehive hairdo; a boy in his twenties who had on a red "Cat" hat; a teenaged girl with false eyelashes and painted fingernails; and a boy about eight years old with freckles and a tee-shirt that read: "Mama went to Miami and All I Got Was this Shirt."

"We got enough to feed Pharaoh's army," the old lady insisted.

"Oh, no thank you," Marianne stammered, "I just ate a salad before coming to meet the train. You're very sweet..."

"Salad! Rabbit food! You take this cake. It'll stick to your ribs."

Marianne had little choice but to take the cake or be rude to the old lady. She hoped that by taking the piece of cake, she would pacify the woman's need to be friendly and avoid any further conversation.

"Where you headed?" the old lady persisted.

"To Tallahassee."

"Us, too. You going to the talent show?"

"No, Ma'am, I'm going to the University there."

"Oh, I see, you go to school there."

"Actually, I teach school in Georgia. I've been asked to Tallahassee to read a poem I wrote."

"Poetry! Never cared too much for poetry myself, but Melinder here," she pointed her thumb in the direction of the teenage girl, "she sings songs. We're headed now to put her in a talent contest. First Prize is \$500; we figure if she wins, it'll more'n pay for the trip down here. If she don't, we'll just call it vacation. This here," she pointed to the woman, "is my daughter, Glender. That's her boy, Rex, Melinder's brother. And this here is my boy, Glender's brother and Melinder's and Rex's Uncle Bubber. Sing a song for her, Melinder."

Melinda glared at the old lady, squirmed around in her seat, shrugged her shoulders, and refused to sing, much to Marianne's relief.

"The cake was delicious," Marianne said and claimed to be sleepy in order to avoid more conversation.

"Just like Bubber, get your stomach full and cain't think of nothing but sleeping," the old lady first had compared her to Melinda and now to Bubba.

Marianne forced a smile and turned around to pretend to sleep. Luckily, she wasn't really sleepy, for sleep would have been impossible. Now that the old woman, evidently chief of the outfit behind her, had led in the introductions of the family, it was Glenda's turn to hold the attention of the people in the back of the train. Marianne never dared to move or even open an eye for fear that one of the family was looking for a sign that she was awake, but she could not help listening.

"Good God A-motty, it's hot as Hades," Glenda announced. "You'd know it'd be our car that's a.c. broke down."

"Well, I don't believe I'd take the Lord's name in vain about it; it might take a turn for the hotter," the grandmother answered. "Besides, if you'd put out that cigarette, it'd cut down on the heat. The sign says as plain as day 'No Smoking.' You're s'pose to go yonder in the toilet if you got to smoke."

"The lounge, Grandmother," Melinda corrected through clamped teeth.

Glenda did not answer the grandmother, and the grandmother did not answer Melinda. But after a moment of silence, Glenda continued.

"Heat like this always makes me proud I ain't like Lucy Tazewell. She cain't sweat. She was in Melinder's PE class at school and got so hot she passed out doing jumpin' jacks. They had to rush her to Tazewell's store on the bluff and stick her in her Daddy's meat freezer. I always said it was a lucky thing for her that her daddy had that store."

Marianne wished they would be quiet, but at the same time found her-



self straining to hear words and phrases that she missed. They repelled and attracted her simultaneously.

"What you gonna sing in the contest, Melinder, a hymn?"

"You could win it with a hymn," the grandmother persuaded.

"I can win it *without* a hymn," stated Melinda.

"What then?" the grandmother asked, not to be defeated.

"I'm not telling."

The grandmother, at last, was quiet.

Marianne began to remember a time, long past, in her own life. Her own grandmother. And a talent show.

I wanna thank all y'all good folks for bein' here with us agin tonight on the old home-grown opry, spinning the hits you wanna hear til midnight. . . . We wanna send one out by Hank Williams tonight for the Standard Station in Phenix City, Alabamer, and Pat and Jerry Flowers wants to hear one by Miss Patsy Cline. We're gonna send this next one out to Simpson's Hardware way down in Cuber, Alabamer. Here's the Car-  
ters. . . .

"Here, honey, pin these mimosa blooms in your hair. They look pretty with your pink dance dress. Wait, now, here comes a good one to dance to. . . ."

Ooo, it'd been better for us both had we never

In this wild and wicked world we'd never met

For this pleasure we've both seemed to gather

I'm sure love, I'll never forget

Oh I'm thinking tonight of my blue eyes. . . .

"Dance, Sweetheart, tap dance!"

Marianne danced while her grandmother stood there holding the grand bouquet of mimosa blooms, and smiling an even grander smile.

Marianne spent every Saturday night with her grandmother, really her great-grandmother, who lived in the back of the country grocery store that she had

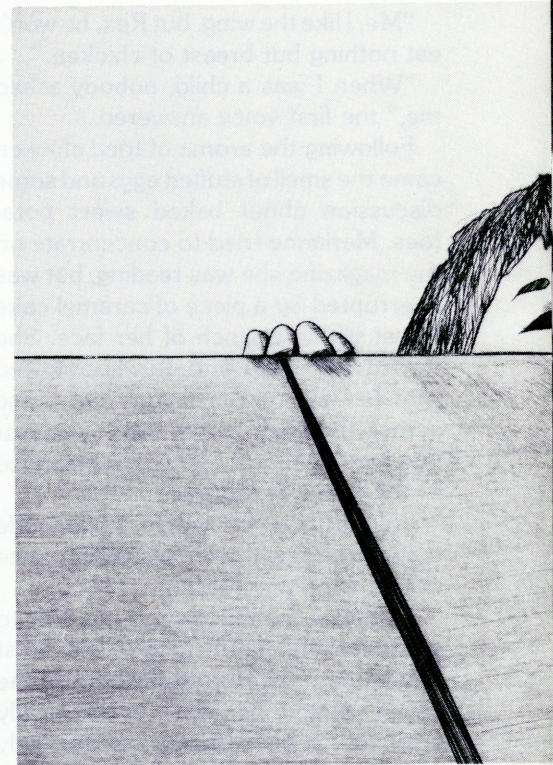
owned and run for years. After losing a husband and a daughter, the woman had run it alone until the grandson her daughter had left when she died, Marianne's father, was old enough to take over the business. Now she was too old and Marianne too young for much else than each other. So Marianne was allowed to spend Saturday nights with Grandmother in the room in the back of the store. They sat up until midnight every Saturday night until "the ole home-grown opry" went off the air. Once they had written a request for a song on a postal card and had heard their own names on the radio. That night they were too excited to sleep, even after midnight. They lay awake, warm and safe, surrounded by the feather mattress, staring at the ceiling which was spookily lighted by the orangey glow from the gas space heater, and they planned a trip to the real opry, the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee. They both knew they would never go, but oh! the Saturday nights that were filled to the brim with plans. The stories that grew week after week!

It was several months after hearing their names on the air that they heard about the talent contest. Summer had come, school was out, and Marianne spent other nights, besides Saturdays, with her grandmother. The space heater was cut off, the windows all open to the chirping of crickets, the croaking of frogs, and the signals of lightning bugs. The thick feather mattress was stifling, but from time to time, a breeze blew through the window, bringing with it the sweet smells of honeysuckle and chinaberry blooms.

We wanna show all our friends and listeners how much we 'preciate you tunin' in to the ole home-grown opry evry Saturday night here with us and we've done a little talkin' with our good sponsors and we're gonna have a real fine talent contest for you, our listeners. Maybe some of you out there in radioland can have your own record out by next year at this time. Friend, if you can sing, if you can fiddle, if you can dance, if you have any other talent you think our lisners here on the opry might enjoy, you just drop us a

card in the mail Monday morning . . . you have nothing to lose and the winner will receive a brand new fifty dollar bill from us and our sponsors. Mark that date on your calendar, Friend, that's July 20, two weeks from today, right here in Montgomery, Alabamer. Just drop that card in the mail and we'll send you all the information you need and register you in our show. And if you don't enter the show, come on out and see the stars of tomorrow today. . . .

Marianne and her grandmother looked at each other, their eyes round

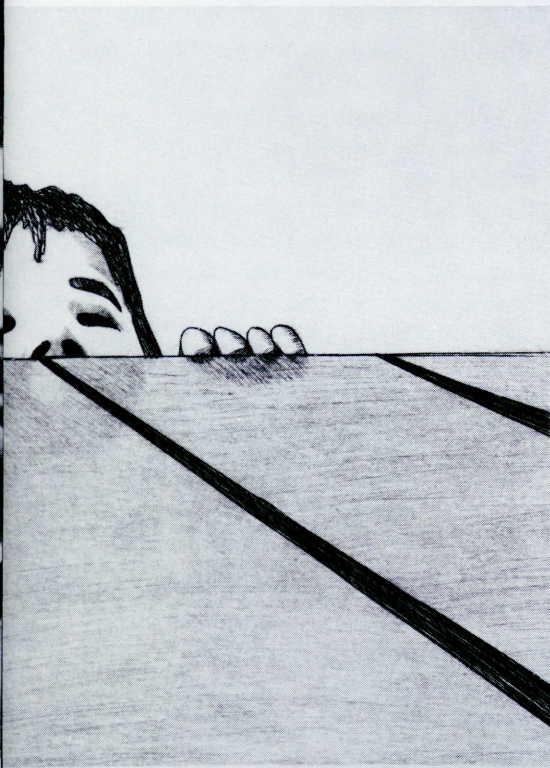


with excitement. Grandmother's tiny blue eyes danced with mischief. Maybe they would never make it to the real Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, but they would find a way to get to the talent show in Montgomery. The next two weeks were filled with planning—deciding which song Marianne tap danced to best, whether or not to sew sequins on the pink dress, but the biggest problem that had to be solved was



how to get to Montgomery the day of the contest. All this must be planned in secret; Marianne's parents would never consent. Of course this meant that she and her grandmother would simply have to lie on the day of the show. That was scary, but at the same time exciting, the most exciting thing they'd ever done, as a matter of fact.

The next day, they pulled out the old victrola and the stack of about a dozen records that Grandmother had collected over the years. They had to narrow the choice down to one record that Marianne could practice to, not just what ever happened to play on the



radio. For old time's sake, they played the dusty records: "Life Gets Tedious, Don't It" and laughed, then "Old Shep" and cried; finally they found just the right record for Marianne to tap dance to, one called "Down Yonder." It didn't have words, but the rhythm was just right for tap dancing.

Two weeks of practice went by almost too quickly. The excitement grew as did the dreams. Neither would

admit to the other the slightest doubt of Marianne winning the contest. If the idea entered the grandmother's mind, she turned the music up; if Marianne began to doubt, she just tapped all the harder.

"Just think how that'll sound on the stage, Sweet. So much better than on this ole linoleum."

When the day of the contest finally arrived, the old lady and the little girl left a note explaining their scheme in a place where Marianne's parents wouldn't find it until it was too late to stop them. Then, they watched anxiously for the Southern Bread truck to arrive at the store. They waited around the corner from the front of the store, to avoid being seen by Marianne's daddy, until the breadman came out of the store and was ready to get into his truck and drive off. They asked him for a ride to the Post Office, as they had so many times before, and, in spite of the NO HITCHHIKERS sign in the front window of the truck, he gladly gave them the ride. He had known Grandmother for years and Marianne for all her life; he always referred to them as "Old Miss" and "Little Miss." It was not until they arrived at the Post Office that they told him their plan to ride all the way to Montgomery with him. The breadman, not wanting to get involved in the family squabble that was bound to follow such an act, hesitated to take them. But, when the ladies announced their alternate plan of hitchhiking with strangers, he relented. Marianne changed into her pink dress in the back of the bread truck; her grandmother held in one hand a fistful of pink mimosa blossoms wrapped in a damp paper napkin and the record of "Down Yonder" in the other. The breadman, finding himself in such a fix, was miserable.

As they rode into Montgomery, the grandmother fumbled for the note that the old home-grown opry had sent with directions and other information. "The contest," she announced to the breadman, "will be held in the Rhinoceros Social Club, 65 Lee Street, next to the Rapture Church of God."

The breadman sighed heavily, and silently made a left turn onto Lee Street. Soon, the two were left alone on the curb in front of the Social Club. Neither said a word to worry or discourage the

other, but the Social Club didn't look very sociable. It was made of cement blocks and someone had written cuss words on it with red paint. They began the journey from the curb to the door.

They were met at the door by a tall, lanky, grinning fellow who wanted to see Marianne's card of certification that she was a contest member, and wanted a dollar for admission from Grandmother.

"Dear me, I don't *have* a dollar. But I'm her guardian, don't-you-see, she's a minor. . ." The old lady's voice trailed off worriedly as the fellow, not grinning anymore, shook his head from side to side.

"Rules is rules, Ma'am. If I let you in for free, I'd have to let all the rest of these folks in free, too."

"But, sir," broke in Marianne, "we always listen to the ole home-grown opry til midnight every Saturday. We even wrote a request and had our names on the air. Cain't you let us speak to T.J. the D.J.? Maybe he'd even remember. . ."

The fellow was shaking his head slower but with more determination. "Listen little girl and kind lady. . ."

But Grandmother interrupted him with the announcement that she and Marianne needed to discuss a thing or two and she wondered how much time they had before the show. The fellow told her that they had less than ten minutes, so she pulled Marianne aside and explained that they were going to need the only money they had to get back on and that she really didn't mind waiting outside. She could hear about the show and what went on behind the stage and all from Marianne afterwards.

"Wait though, left me pin the mimosas in your hair. Don't you look pretty!"

Grudgingly Marianne went inside without her grandmother. She knew immediately that she didn't have a chance at winning. Singers were there with agents; dancers were there with matching outfits. She was almost forgotten in the shuffle. T.J. was the Master of Ceremonies and one of the judges. But Marianne didn't care. The



"friend" she and her grandmother had shared all of their Saturday nights with looked like a crook. He had tiny, filed-down looking false teeth and shifty eyes. The bright green cactuses that decorated the lapels of his jacket were flecked with dandruff. Marianne knew that when it was her turn to dance she would do it, not for T.J. or any of the judges, but for Grandmother—for the hope, for the shattered dream. She never told her grandmother that she heard the grinning fellow and T.J. refer to them as "that crazy ole dame and the tap-dancing brat with pink flowers in her hair."

When she had finished her dance, she heard a few people clap and others comment that she was cute, but she ran out the door of that awful Rhinoceros Social Club without looking back. She even forgot her curtsy. She just wanted to find her grandmother and leave that town, to go back home, to bury herself in the safe feather mattress and cry.

She and her grandmother set out immediately for the bus station. They were almost back to the curb where the breadman had left them what seemed like an eternity ago, when a sweating fat man came running up to them from the direction of the Rapture Church of God.

"Ma'am," he began in a high-pitched, wounded voice, "you haven't let this sweet child here be a part of the goings-on in that Den of Iniquity there, have you?," he asked, pointing to the Social Club.

"Unfortunately, Sir, I am guilty of such, but I didn't know," Marianne's grandmother apologized. Marianne looked up and saw a shamed look on the gentle old face.

"Ma'am, my name is Pastor Charlie and I'm gonna pray for you and that sweet child and I'm invitin' you to step

into the Rapture Church of God here with me and join me in prayer, prayer that may save Y-O-U-R souls. . .to E-R-a-a-a-S-E sins. Marianne heard his voice begin to quiver. He held the word "erase" quivering for at least thirty seconds, then he dropped his tone and let the word "sins" explode from his mouth. His eyes were closed tightly and his face was tuned up to cry. Sweat was beaded all over his forehead and above his upper lip.

Marianne looked from Pastor Charlie to her great-grandmother. Tears were pouring from the old blue eyes. Pastor Charlie had made her grandmother cry. More than anything T.J. had said or done, more than the humiliation of the contest, more than not winning, this angered the child.

"C'mon, Grandmother," she said suddenly and forcefully, "this man is no different from T.J. and the rest."

A mimosa bloom had fallen down into her face, but she didn't bother to move it. She spent all her force glaring at Pastor Charlie. With a start, the Pastor opened his eyes, jerked back down his uplifted arm, and puffed something that sounded like "well!" as he stomped back to the Rapture Church of God in a fury.

Marianne and Grandmother trudged on toward the bus station, knowing that what awaited them at home would not be pleasant. They never again listened to T.J. on Saturday night. But neither of them ever mentioned not listening. They found other ways to entertain themselves for the few years that were left to them together.

Marianne jumped, startled, back to the present. Something had touched her face. It took a few seconds to get her bearings; then she realized that the old woman on the seat behind, had her face less than an inch away.

"Jes' checking to make sure you were alright. Stuck my finger under your nose to see if you was breathing. . . jes' sitting there, not talking, staring off for so long, I got to fearing that you might be dead or sick or in some sort of trance or something. . . ."

"No Ma'am," Marianne stammered, still not recomposed from the shock of the old woman's unexpected action.

"Five minutes to Tallahassee," the old lady announced. "You slept or day-dreamed or something all the way. How 'bout some coffee to wake you up good before you get there? Bubber brought a thermosful that's jes' gonna go to waste if nobody don't drink it," she declared, waving a large red thermos bottle in Marianne's face, for proof, she supposed. "He's a coffee-fiend, but it was too hot even for him to drink it on this train."

"Thank you, I'd love a cup of coffee," answered Marianne. "And I'd like for you to have this," she added after a few seconds—and she handed the old lady a folded piece of paper. "It's my poem. . ."

"C'moooooon Grandmaw," yelled Rex as he stamped his foot from the front of the train where the rest of the family had lined up. Marianne felt the need to say more, but the grandmother awkwardly bent down and kissed her cheek, then hurried off to join the waiting family. **C**





## Fog and Water

I looked out on the bay this morning  
 And saw the fog sleeping with the water;  
 I stood there thinking of a certain man's daughter  
 While the tide came slowly in.  
 I stood there again as evening fell  
 And the fog crept back to seduce the water;  
 My thoughts turned again to a certain man's daughter  
 While the tide came slowly in.  
 Yesterday I watched a white seagull  
 As it banked and flashed in the sun;  
 It turned with the tide and flew over green fields  
 As though going to search for someone . . .  
 But today there is only the fog and the water  
 As I stand here thinking of a certain man's daughter.

T.J. Lockhart

3rd Place Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest

etching by Betsy Burts



### in a quickmart

surrealistic negro finds himself  
in a quickmart unaware  
how he arrived what  
the score is  
how many fouls he has left

now his grandmother rides  
him piggyback past the canned corn  
she flashes a harriet tubman grin

slowly he is melting to white  
and worried about the wine  
and mushrooms he consumed earlier  
breaks out a hairnet sings  
falsetto about his baby thumps  
gatoraid tops for backup

it is raining inside now  
he's soiled the knees of five-  
hundred dollar pinstripes  
crying on sliding glass doors  
his reflected face falls down

at night he sweeps up the place

Ken Taylor

### codetalker

overnight  
rain has left the plants  
unbroken and shining  
on the front porch.  
morning sunlight  
hangs in the fern's moisture  
like wet beads  
of blown glass.  
breath accumulates  
in the cool air  
like a soul taking shape.

overhead  
the scarlet oak leaves  
grow as brittle  
as aging bones.  
ghost cells  
drift in the blood  
like a thought unspoken.  
unattached desire  
rises like a burst of steam  
and catches  
on a limb of air.

A.J. Wright



ething by Ed Deyo

### When Even Summer is Sick and Green

When even summer is sick and green,  
and listing birds call petulantly  
across the sticky air;  
When impotent blue jays, screaming,  
swoop on insolent cats  
who patiently wait their turn;  
When night is thick and muggy with no stars  
and the fuzzy moon was scribbled yellow  
by some bored and inaccurate child,  
I wonder how this can be enough for you.

When women waste their roses  
in dishes on the table,  
Though roses bow their heads in two days  
and drop petals on sick summer;  
When water is still and covered with the shiny film  
that makes sand beaches look oily;  
When summer is only this,  
And you have only summer,  
How can you still believe?

When I am one who would have you ground your life  
in more than summer,  
To see in me (and other men)  
more reason to believe than you will find  
in drooping roses or pendulum moons,  
But they spit and shout  
and offer you vinegar to drink,  
How can even I believe?

Margaret Renkl

Honorable Mention Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest



# Low-Cost Cuisine At Auburn

by Robin Shumpert

Two things a student never has enough of are time and money. Therefore, he is in great need of ideas for meals that are inexpensive and quickly prepared. An informal sample of the finest low-cost cuisine to be found on the dinner tables of Auburn students turned up the collection of recipes on the opposite page.

Julie Olliff, an Early Childhood Education major from Pensacola, Florida, misses her hometown seafood, so she has discovered a simple way to enjoy a seafood delicacy in an inland town. Her Shrimp Creole is quick, inexpensive, and authentic-tasting.

Fellow Floridian Tim Warzecha has discovered a new kind of tuna casserole that he claims is a favorite with the guys at his house. They say his Tuna Divan is even better than his potato pancakes (ambitious cooks among our readers must personally request his recipe for those).

On more exotic lines, George Spoford, a law school-bound Philosophy

major, suggests investing in a wok. The advantages are fourfold: as less meat is used in wok dishes, meals are less expensive; many recipes can be adapted to wok cookery; the food cooks faster in a wok; and clean-up time is reduced as there is only one pot to wash.

George offers his Wok'd Chicken to break in your new kitchen gadget and suggests the dish be accompanied with his garlic corn.

Your wok also could be used for Dr. Don Bellante's Ginger Pork, a dish for students looking for a foreign flavor.

Anywhere there is eating, there is dieting, and Fashion Merchandising major Janet Vailes contributed a recipe for Miracle Soup that is full of taste, but not calories. She suggests making this before class to allow the soup to simmer in a crock pot for a couple of hours before eating.

Those looking for food more substantial than soup might try David Wilson's Dorito Casserole. A Civil Engineering major, David shares his time with the U.S. Navy, so he is always searching for meals which are quick but hearty enough to fill up a hungry sailor.

Another spicy taste pleasure is Emily Griffith's rival for Country's Barbecue. Her Barbecups are simple, inexpensive, and perfect for the student who, like Emily, has more projects to do than time to cook.

Leilani Strong of Birmingham suggests a vegetable recipe that makes meat eaters ask for seconds. This broccoli casserole is delicious and quick to prepare.

Terri Williams, a Hospital Administration major, likes a baked apple dish that can be used as a side dish or as a dessert. Red hot candy is the secret ingredient in her tasty recipe.

And speaking of desserts, are there such things as low calorie goodies? Edie Ryan, a Coordinated Dietetics major, brings good news when she answers yes with her recipe for Lemon Crisps.

My own incurable sweet tooth has driven me to contribute one of my favorite goody recipes learned in my Girl Scout days—Fruit Crunch.

These recipes are meant to inspire ideas for creative, low-cost cuisine at Auburn. Try these suggestions, experiment with variation and exchange your findings with your fellow starving students.



### **Shrimp Creole**

(Costs \$2.75)

1 can Libby's Spanish Rice, 15 oz.

1 can small shrimp, 4¼ oz.

Heat both over high heat and then let simmer for about 20 minutes. Can add spices to taste, but is delicious as is.

### **Wok'd Chicken**

(Costs \$4.50)

light oil, sunflower or peanut

1 clove garlic

chicken

broccoli

snow peas

mushrooms

Place a couple of tablespoons of oil in wok and heat. Crush the garlic clove into the oil. Dice chicken and cook until almost done. Remove from wok and put broccoli in. Allow broccoli to turn bright green, then remove. Put snow peas and mushrooms in and let steam until they reach the desired tenderness. Add broccoli and chicken again and reheat. Remove entire meal from wok just before it has finished cooking; it will finish cooking on the way to the table.

### **Tuna Divan**

(Costs \$3.25)

1 10 oz. pkg. frozen broccoli spears

1 12½ or 13 oz. can tuna

1 T. lemon juice

1 11 oz. can condensed cheddar soup

1 T. seasoned dried bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook broccoli, flake tuna. Stir lemon juice and undiluted soup into tuna. In 8 x 8 baking dish or shallow casserole, evenly arrange broccoli; spoon tuna mixture over broccoli; sprinkle with crumbs. Bake 25 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Makes 4 servings.

### **Garlic Corn**

(Costs \$1.00)

1 can corn

1 clove garlic

tabasco sauce

butter

several small cubes cheddar cheese

Heat corn with garlic. Add tabasco sauce and butter. Right before serving, add cubes of cheddar cheese.

### **Ginger Pork**

(Costs \$3.75)

½ lb. pork, the cheapest cut will suffice

3 t. ginger

½ t. curry powder

1 T. soy sauce

Chinese pea pods

mushrooms

1½-2 cups cooked rice

Slice pork in very thin strips and place in pan. Add ginger, curry powder and soy sauce and let cook until meat is almost done; then add mushrooms and Chinese pea pods. When pods are at desired tenderness, stir in the cooked rice and serve.

### **Miracle Soup**

(Costs \$5.00)

6 large yellow onions

2 green peppers (opt.)

2 large cans tomatoes

1 large head cabbage

1 large bunch celery

1 package onion soup mix

1 package carrots

Cut up cabbage, peppers, celery and carrots. Cut onions into quarters. Cut vegetables into medium pieces. Put everything into a large pot or crock pot. Cut up tomatoes and use all juice. Add to ingredients in the pot. Cover vegetables with water and add salt and pepper. Boil rapidly with lid on for 10 minutes. Continue to cook or simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 1 hour.



### **Mexican Dorito Casserole**

(Costs \$4.50)

3 lbs. ground beef  
salt, pepper  
1 large onion, chopped  
2 cans tomato sauce  
seasoning, chili or taco  
Doritos: taco, nacho, or corn flavored

Brown ground beef and drain ground beef. Add salt, pepper, chopped onion, tomato sauce, and seasoning. Let simmer for about 20 minutes. In a casserole dish, place a layer of Dorito chips, then a layer of meat mixture, and so on, ending with meat. Crumble Dorito chips on top. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes. Serves 5.

### **Broccoli Casserole**

(Costs \$3.00)

2 (10 oz.) packages chopped frozen broccoli, cooked  
3 cups cooked rice  
1 can condensed mushroom or celery soup  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped celery (opt.)  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped mushrooms (opt.)  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cracker crumbs  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Velveeta cheese

Stir cheese into hot rice, add drained broccoli, soup, celery, and mushrooms. Pour into casserole dish, cover with additional cheese, if desired, and cracker crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

### **Lemon Crisps**

(Costs \$1.50)

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup oil  
2 eggs  
1 t. grated lemon peel  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup pecans (opt.)  
1 Duncan Hines Lemon Supreme cake mix

Combine all ingredients and drop by teaspoonfuls on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes.

### **Baked Apples**

(Costs \$2.00)

4 cooking apples  
allspice  
red hot candy  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar

Peel and quarter apples. Cook in enough water to cover apples and stir in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar. Cook until almost tender. Place in pyrex dish, sprinkle more sugar. Sprinkle allspice and red hot candy, and dot with butter. Bake at 325 degrees until tender.

### **Poppin' Fresh Barbecups**

(Costs \$2.75)

$\frac{3}{4}$  lb. ground beef  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Kraft Barbecue Sauce  
1 T. instant minced onion  
1 can Pillsbury Tenderflake Biscuits  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup shredded Kraft cheddar cheese

In large skillet, brown beef; drain. Add barbecue sauce and onion. Separate dough into biscuits. Place each biscuit in an ungreased muffin cup, pressing dough up sides to edge of cup. Spoon meat into cups. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes until golden brown. Sprinkle with cheese.

### **Fruit Crunch**

(Costs \$2.75)

1 can any pie filling  
1 box cheapest white or yellow cake mix  
1 stick butter or margarine  
1 cup chopped nuts (opt.)

Pour pie filling into bottom of 8 x 8 baking dish and sprinkle dry cake mix over filling. Melt butter and pour over this. Crumble nuts on top, if desired. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour. May be served with whipped topping or ice cream.



1st Place Sigma Tau Delta  
Short Story Contest

# COUNTERVALATION

by Brian Hughes

**“Countervalation” in its original form was too lengthy for *Circle* publication. As a result the italicized print summarizes action occurring in the middle of the story. The end, however, has not been altered.**

Ray Ormsbane riffled through the stack of fresh bills. At least those who had sent him to internal exile had given him a stipend of sorts. This was fortunate, as he had not been allowed much baggage on the dirigible. Quite a pile was accumulating on the worn counter of Ogon, Canada’s only general store; he did not own warm clothing anymore, and the Canadian Rockies were cool even in summer.

The storekeeper, an Ecosocialist with the insignia of a Local Coordinator on the brim of his battered leather visor, was not a talkative man. However, he communicated his dislike of Ormsbane and all which Ormsbane represented to him. The exile paid for his purchases and left as soon as he could, looking for the local freetrader. Several hours and a lot of money—a fiat currency called the Environmental Cost Unit—later, he had a weapon.

It was a compact and deadly Heckler and Koch Model 550 automatic assault rifle, caliber 6mm Strauss, with folding stock and 75-round drum magazine. When he slung the carrying strap over

his left shoulder, leaving the pistol grip close to his right hand, Ormsbane felt better than he had for some time.

*It soon became evident to Ormsbane that his period of exile was not going to be dull. On his hike out to the research station to which he had been assigned, he saw a strange animal in Lake Ogonquin. He also saw an operating gold dredge, which indicated to him that the Ecosocialists were not especially concerned about the environment when such concern proved inconvenient.*

*Soon after, he found a newly-cut trail forking off from the original path, which was closed at the fork. He soon found out why the older trail—which followed the lakeshore—was closed.*

As he drew nearer to the beach, Ormsbane was suddenly feeling very apprehensive. He walked rapidly, finger resting on the rifle’s trigger, as he approached the talus and mudstone-strand.

It was a distinct shock. In later years, and from a vastly altered perspective, Ormsbane often marveled that he could have been so frightened. When

he emerged from the strand of pine and fir which concealed the beach from the trail, he came face to face—if that were the right expression—with the creature he had seen from the top of the cliff.

Partially beached, its rather warty, gray, segmented skin glistened with a mucous secretion. Two knoblike organs, at either end of a bar of stiff tissue set perpendicular to its long axis, turned to face him. The upraised proboscis, resembling the neck and head of an eyeless plesiosaur with an incompetent orthodontist, extended toward him.

Ormsbane recoiled from the animal. It stirred in him a visceral reaction of horror, loathing and absolute rejection. He backed away from it as rapidly as he could, too frightened to scream.

With a feeling of sick terror, he watched the proboscis as it reached toward him, the knob organs moving to follow him, eyelike. His finger tightened convulsively, and the assault rifle crackled, its report ringing his ears.

He hadn’t aimed at all; the bullets caromed harmlessly off the shingle. Yet







It awaited, a scant ten meters away.

Ormsbane sat with his back to the cliffs, ensconced in a pile of rocks and storm wrack, in the proper firing position. The earphone beeped steadily in his ear. The monster had advanced to a position five meters away, its proboscis hovering a meter away from the menace of the rifle's muzzle, on a level with the man's face.

"Well, Worm," he said to the animal, "You'll either get fed or dead. I wish it didn't have to be this way."

The eyeless head cocked to one side as if to hear him better. Its mouth, irregular stylet teeth gleaming white against the animal's dark grey skin, was open, and Ormsbane looked down its throat.

"A possible destination for me," he said, "but not one I would choose." Ormsbane was beyond fear now. The numbing terror which had gripped his mind earlier was reduced to a dull, fatigued unease.

"Look," he said, knowing that trying to reason with several tons of primitive invertebrate was silly. Facetiously he asked himself if it would hurt to try. "I'm just an ecologist who got in trouble with the powers that be. I don't want to kill you."

The proboscis reared up as though its owner were surprised. Ormsbane kept his sights on it until it relaxed again.

Both of the knobs on the animal's transverse bar instantly turned to face him, and Ormsbane suddenly realized that they looked like eyes. He felt strangely relieved and wondered why. Then he realized that the last traces of the fear were abruptly gone. No longer a hideous monster, the thing was suddenly nothing more than a large, ugly and curious animal previously unknown to science.

Curious? Ormsbane asked himself, realizing he had used the word to mean inquisitive rather than unusual. His own curiosity was stimulated. The thing had reacted to his words in a most unanimal way, or was it just to the sound of his voice?

Ormsbane recited a monic for the

cranial nerves, a ballad, and several bawdy limericks. These made no impression on animal, leaving the man at a loss for something to do next.

*Think, you idiot, think!* he chided himself silently. *Think?* his battered mind replied. *Think of what? Think. . . Oh no! It couldn't be intelligent or telepathic. Ridiculous!*

"It is, nonetheless, a possibility," he said aloud, half to himself and half to the animal. "You didn't react to words without a message. How will you react to a message without words?"

Keeping the rifle at the ready, he thought as clearly as he could: *If you understand me, pick up a rock in your mouth. If you understand me, but if picking up a rock would hurt you, bob*



*your proboscis up and down.*

The structure in question looped toward the shingle, jaws open. The mouth closed on a large stone and lifted it, holding it about three meters above the beach.

Now, Ormsbane thought, *if you mean me no harm, drop the rock in the lake. Hold onto it otherwise.*

The creature's next action startled him. Its proboscis moved, placing the rock into the shallow water at lake's edge, but not releasing it. To his credit, Ormsbane understood.

*Right. I can understand your caution. If you think you can communicate with me as I am doing with you, move one of your bar organs. If not, do nothing.*

One of the animal's 'eyes' moved slightly.

*Very good. Ormsbane was feeling vague and unreal. Now, try to send me something. If you succeed, I will lower my weapon. Otherwise, I will not, and we'll try something else.*

The alien thought flowed into his awareness. He saw an image of himself, oddly discolored and distorted by a

nonhuman nervous system, as he sat with his back to the cliff, rifle raised.

*I can communicate with you,* said a voice which appeared to come from inside his head.

The alien mind-touch was warm and feminine; he would have called it a contralto had it been spoken. Ormsbane dropped his rifle in surprise, and as he did so the creature raised its—her!—proboscis and let the rock fall.

"*Miren. . .*" said Ormsbane, vocalizing and thinking the name. "*My mind is playing tricks on me. That is a Spanish command verb which means, roughly, 'look ye'. Yet that is your name, indubitably.*"

Of course. The reply was filled with gentle amusement and understanding. *Your mind unconsciously interprets my thoughts in the forms you know. My name means exactly that, Ray. My thoughts seem to you to be the voice of a female of your species because I am in fact female. Although you do not consider me to be much to look at. Ormsbane could hear her laughter; his mind made the unspoken amusement into a dulcet, melodious thing.*

*Now your name, the last one that is . . . as you would say it. . . 'scares the stuffing out of me.' But only because you know its old significance. Ray, I really like you. Your mind is resilient and able enough to turn my protective telepathy. . . ugly runt that you are!*

When Ormsbane stopped laughing, he thought *De gustibus non disputandum est, Miren. You know, it's surprising. Physically, we are about as alien to each other as can be. In spite of that, here we are sharing a joke on each other.*

With a start of guilt, Ormsbane suddenly remembered the director. Hastily he stood, forgetting his ankle, which did not hesitate to give him a pointed and nasty reminder.

*Ray! You must be badly hurt!* Miren thought as his pain shot through both their minds. Her mind-touch held tender concern.

*Can't be helped. If I don't get a medical man to help my boss, he is going to*



the noise stopped the thing. It immediately backed away, moving with a ponderous, boneless speed astonishing in such a bulky animal. Ormsbane did not wait to watch its retreat.

When he reached the fork of the trail, scared and winded, Ormsbane collapsed onto a boulder to collect his wits. Once recovered, he filled the rifle's drum, replacing the shells he had spent. It would cost him when he had to buy more ammunition, but he'd be damned if he was going back to collect the spent brass.

When Ormsbane reached his destination, he learned that the scientists exiled there before him had also experienced close contact with the creature; the thing was not well-disposed toward humans and definitely dangerous. Its presence had brought all work to a stop, forcing the exiles to fabricate the scientific work they were supposed to be doing. They did not wrestle with their consciences over such falsification; a prominent Ecosocialist would be given all credit for their work.

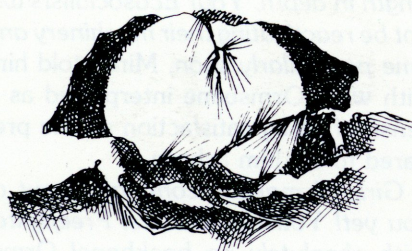
With the same computer that was being used to falsify their data, Ormsbane and the others tied into central data banks and amused themselves by tracing Ormsbane's ancestry. He learned that his family name was originally an honorific, bestowed on an ancestor for killing what may have been a creature like the one in Lake Ogonquin. A reference found in the Ormsbane ancestral search led the scientists to material which enabled them to identify the lake monster as the descendant of a 250-million-year-old invertebrate, *Tullimonstrum gregarium*. The modern version was some two thousand times the size of the fossil.

Shortly after this discovery, the leader of the exiles injured himself severely when his foot slipped into the path of the axe he was using at the time. Since Ormsbane was the only one of the two uninjured exiles who had a weapon, he had to go to town for help. Inclement weather kept him from going that day, and by the next morn-

ing, the alternate trail was impassable and the injured man's foot had become infected. Ormsbane had to follow the shore of Lake Ogonquin to a point where the trail could be travelled.

A low snuffle behind him made Ormsbane, whose nerves were already both-ering him, spin around to face his rear. The treacherous shingle of the beach trail shifted under his boot, nearly causing him to fall, and a sharp pain lanced his right ankle as he recovered violently.

Something large and hairy bumbled toward him. He did not use the Kirlan scope, but fired from the hip, holding the bucking, roaring weapon on target until the grizzly bear stopped two meters from him, its thick skull pulverized by the rifle's high velocity slugs.



Wondering why an animal normally shy of man had been running toward him, Ormsbane looked up the beach. A long proboscis which he recognized instantly was probing along the shingle, cutting him off from the way back to the station.

Slowly, hurting with every step, he backed up against the cliff, edging slowly away from the bear carcass, but the creature moved faster than he could. It stopped at the bear, nudged it, then sank its stylet teeth into the torn and bloody hide and dragged the carcass into the water and out of sight.

Ormsbane forced himself to stand there and reload the magazine drum. Once this was concluded, he moved onward, toward Ogon. The cliffs at his back ran in an unbroken rampart for 1.5 kilometers to the northeast, where they were interrupted at the place where he and the thing had first met. He wished he was walking the longer trail atop those grim cliffs.

Wishing won't move your feet, he told himself. Your little playmate is probably waiting for a dessert, so

retreat is not a particularly wise idea. No, it must be onward you go, Bane of the Worm! Maybe you'll get the chance to keep up the family tradition.

His flippantness failed to cheer him, but it did give Ormsbane the courage to continue.

One foot, then the other, he ordered his agonized body after an indeterminate time of painful, creeping, but steady progress.

In four places along his route, the cliffs made promontories out into the water, breaking the smooth concave sweep of the wall. He rounded three of these bends over the incessant objections of his injured ankle. The fourth was a mere two hundred meters from the point where the trail entered the forest, but it obstructed his view of the beach ahead.

A look at his watch made Ormsbane realize that he had needed almost an hour to reach the promise of safety. Without stopping he looked at the lake. Whitecaps rose under the stirring of a brisk west wind, and the dark clouds were closer to the mountain peaks. Intermittant rain soaked him, coming in under the collar of his hoodless raincoat. He could have been warmer and not minded the change.

More time passed, and Ormsbane's steady limp brought him to the last promontory. Before rounding it, he leaned against the cliff to rest momentarily. He felt a twinge of apprehension akin to that he had felt upon first seeing the creature.

"I'm almost there, Worm!" he shouted in anger at his own fear, shaking his fist at the threatening sky. "You've picked the wrong prey. *Homo sapiens* can and will fight! Just try something, and I'll make Wormburger out of you!"

Stone rattled ahead of him. Ormsbane raised his rifle and forced his fear down with naked willpower. He wrestled with terror, and won. Crouched over the weapon, he rounded the promontory, waves whipping around his ankles, face forward in challenge.



*hurt a lot worse than I do.* He rapidly and silently explained the situation at the research post.

*Are these the men who hurt me?* Miren demanded in sudden anger.

*I'm afraid so,* Ormsbane replied, reluctantly, for he could see the complications building. But Miren surprised him.

*I was wounded deeply by the biting iron, yet I suppose the man was also. What is the use of further hostilities? Yet what is this you are thinking? Oh! I got the wrong one, not the man who threw the stone! Since I attacked an innocent man, to help him is my obligation!*

Ormsbane suddenly felt very relieved.

*This,* Ormsbane thought, without vocalizing, *will put one hell of a crimp in Leon Bresh's foreign exchange, Miren.* He unslung the Heckler and Koch, cleared the chamber and reloaded it with a cartridge which was not supposed to be available to political exiles. He then attached a 30mm grenade to the weapon's muzzle.

*Miren, this is an obsolete weapon, and is not at all recoilless. Consequently, you'll know when I fire. I will be acquainted with that event much more intimately than you will. So I don't want your reaction to my pain to send me into the drink. Is there anybody on board the target?*

*No, all the people went ashore before dark.*

Ormsbane braced himself carefully, shouldered the weapon, and fired. The weapon sounded similar to an old-style featherweight mortar. He slammed into the base of Miren's transverse eyebar, jarring her and nearly dislodging him.

*I'd rather you didn't do that again,* she thought as the recoil which Ormsbane felt, shocked both their nervous systems.

*Don't worry, I won't if I can help it,* he thought as he flattened himself against the plastic sheet which protected him from her skin secretions. *Just clear the range, fast!*

His request was emphasized by a brilliant flash which strobelit the lake. Man-made thunder roared accompaniment, breaking the starlit silence of Lake Ogonquin. Looking back, Ormsbane saw that the heavy grenade sound, designed to penetrate ferropolymer tank armor, had torn the steel-hulled gold dredge in two. Both halves sank rapidly in a cacophony of hissings and burlings, and were soon submerged.

*The water there is three times my length in depth. Your Ecosocialists will not be reactivating their machinery any time particularly soon,* Miren told him with what Ormsbane interpreted as a sense of smug satisfaction as she prepared to set him ashore.

*Girl, I'll make a commando out of you yet! You'll be the first Freefighter with absolutely no backbone!* Ormsbane was unable to resist the pun. He jumped off her onto the shingle and turned to go.

*Perhaps I lack a spinal column, impetuous manling, but call me not girl! I have lived for ten thousand summers, and girl you call me! Humans!* Her good-natured teasing made Ray stop. Miren's ugly head, which did not contain either of her two widely separated 'brains', extended toward him. Her jaws opened, and Miren dropped something heavy at her friend's feet. It shone wetly yellow in the beam of the human's pocket flash, and when he tried to pick it up, he almost could not.

*Miren, this is a fist-sized lump of very pure gold.* Ormsbane carefully suppressed his decreasing human tendency to vocalize his half of their conversation. The Ecosocialists had

nearly conceded the Ogon region to the resistance, but if they learned of this. . . . The power dredge had been operating on a barely worthwhile margin. One such nugget would turn Ogon into a prize for which to fight, hard and dirty.

*That type of machinery will not get this gold. The water in which it is found is four times deeper than the length of my body.*

*You've never seen gold-crazed men. I have. They ain't pretty.*

*I have seen such men; give a woman respect due her age.* Miren's thought was not exactly thus, but it was delivered in an amused tone that carried a meaning very similar. *Ray, I can help you so. You have often spoken of the freetraders. Well, go to them. Buy weapons: mines, rifles, energy weapons, whatever you need to win.*

Ormsbane stopped worrying. Free-traders stayed alive by being close-mouthed about their transactions; they wouldn't ask questions or spread the word when he paid them in kilos of gold. He looked at his ancient wristwatch, and saw that it would be daylight soon.

His ankle, only newly healed and still weakened, chose that moment to collapse.

*Lean on me,* Ray, said Miren, reaching forward to place her head between him and the hard shingle beach. Ormsbane did so, thankfully and mindless of acid burns from her protective secretions.

Thus the sun's first light found them, Worm and Wormsbane, sharing the dawn of a new understanding. ☉





## The Nature of The Goddess

Afraid? She is not so much  
 Afraid as she is tough.  
 She has seen enough  
 Of men to beware the casual touch,  
 Token of lightly-assumed ownership.  
 She is not by nature cold,  
 But her kind knows of old  
 That awful aspect, the claws that rip  
 The gut-pride.

Women seek  
 The Bitch-Goddess when they need her,  
 But there are other,  
 Softer aspects to them. She was never weak  
 But once was gentler, freely offering  
 A delicate heart to heal  
 A steel-shot soul; she did feel  
 Love, but we sought to snare her in gold string,

Clumsy-handed, greedily grasping, no return of love.  
 Bruised, she retreated, calling upon  
 The Death-Mother, terrible guardian  
 Without mercy; this is the way of

Women

They are better than we.  
 They have strength that we  
 Cannot touch. And  
 We need them more than they  
 need us.

They can be many things, but usually  
 They are what we make them.

And we make them  
 What we do not want.

James S. Grimes

photograph by Donna Waldrop



# THE AUBURN CONNECTION

by Connie Brooks

"How many stitches are in a major league baseball?" "What year did Auburn win the National Football Championship?" "What are the gifts for the twelve days of Christmas?" "When did the draft end?" and "Whose faces are on Mt. Rushmore?"

Answers to these questions and to any other questions one may have can be provided by the students at the Foy Union information desk. Or so the legend goes.

Information pertaining to subjects ranging from Olympic-sized pools to Donald Duck has been researched and recorded in the Black Book. The Black Book is a conglomeration of trivia questions and answers collected since the origin of the desk in 1954.

It contains the names of the thirteen dwarfs from the *Hobbit*, the three Musketeers, Perry Mason's secretary, the Jetson's dog, and the Bobbsey twins. The names of Rocky Balboa's dog, turtles, girlfriend, best friend and opponent are included as well.

Though the Black Book is depended on as a source, many questions students ask require a personal touch. Phone calls asking how long one should

bake a potato or which is the correct way to funnel beer usually call for conferring among the desk managers.

The desk's "know it all" reputation has spread far and wide. One lady called from Washington state. Her daughter attended Auburn and had told her about the student information desk that knew everything. The lady asked who starred in the movie "A Man Called Horse." The desk manager, familiar with movie trivia, made her call worthwhile.

With this conglomeration of facts and a combination of well-informed, well-rounded employees with diversified backgrounds, the Union desk is equipped to answer many questions.

However, a few misconceptions exist about the desk. Though desk managers can often tell students how many windows there are in Haley Center and whether or not the free movie is any good, there are limits to their capabilities.

The following are questions considered unreasonable by even the most dedicated manager:

"What is the name of the blonde who sits across from me in Economics 200?"

"Can you give a name if I give you a phone number?"

"Could you find out who is playing that stereo so loudly in the apartment above mine?"

"Do you know if there is anyone in my advisor's office at 10:00 a.m.?"

Nor should desk managers be expected to find a phone number listed under Bud, Sissy, Red, Smitty, Bubba or Boo, even if that has been his or her name for a long time.

The telephone is the primary source of contact between Union desk managers and other students, but the antics of Auburn students can also be observed directly from the desk.

For instance, late one Saturday evening, several young men with colorful toy hard-hats strolled into the building looking preoccupied with the task they were about to perform. They began taking down the large photograph of the eagle which hangs directly facing the desk. When asked about their actions, they explained that they were on assignment from the Physical Plant and had to remove the picture in order to put up a large wooden sign which read "Beaver Barn." The desk manager suggested that they take the evening off since it was Saturday night, and they obliged.

Further back in the desk's history, a few mobster-type students threw open the doors and fired plastic guns which shot out little plastic discs at the managers. They then flew a paper plane to the desk with the message, "They're everywhere! They're everywhere!"

The Union desk has been referred to as the "heart" of the University. Its purpose is to provide service to students, faculty and visitors to the campus—a job which requires a helpful attitude and, especially, a good sense of humor. Students have always managed the desk and so far this system has been successful, rewarding and even fun.







### A Sentence

A bleak house  
 at the bottom of the hill,  
 a black pot boiling  
 on the wood stove  
 and the smell of earth  
 and the feel of fear  
 inside the house,  
 and the black sky  
 sliding down over  
 the black bodies,  
 and the bleak heart  
 of the hard land beating outside  
 and the porch swing shaking in the wind,  
 and the black hands  
 beside the shallow fire  
 clutching the black Bible.

**Fred Donovan Hill**

### Destin

There is no more effective  
 Curare  
 Than beer  
 And the beach.

Bacardi-bottle green waves  
 Drown the buzzing of the spheres,  
 As the sun paints iodine  
 On the beached,  
 Crippled starfish.

**Alicia Smith**



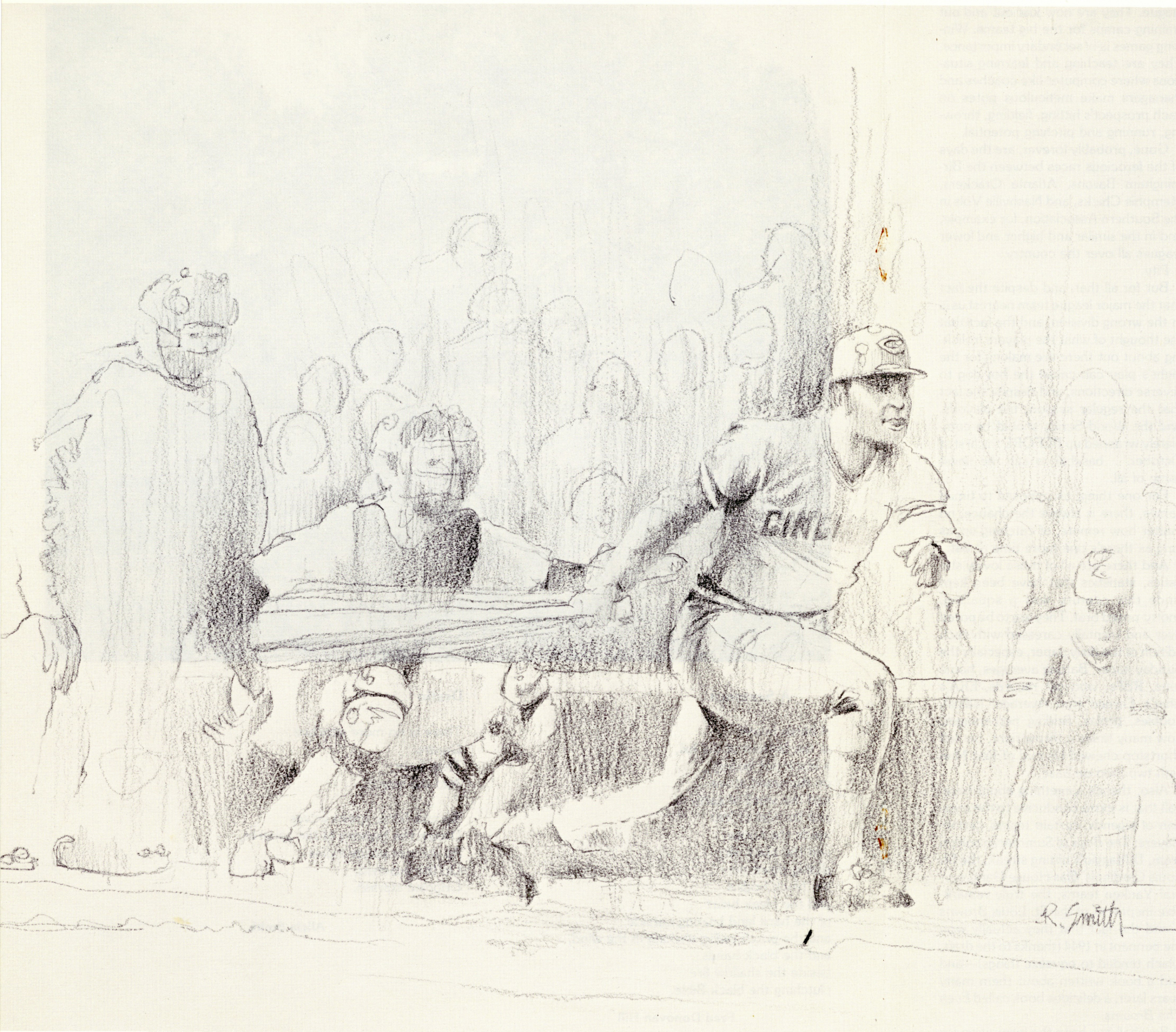


illustration by Rick Smith

## “Quit Fouling Up the National Pastime”

by Bob Sanders

Ah, baseball. It's as much a part of springtime—although a little later—as daffodils. It is as American as any cliché could claim. Yes, it fits in perfectly with apple pie, Chevrolet and motherhood.

There are those, of course, who like the stimulatingly vulgar display of brawn and bluster of football better. That's their privilege.

It never ceases to amaze me that some people also prefer basketball. Now while it is easy to understand how a game with the big round ball might be mildly entertaining in the wintertime, among friends, to kill some time: professional basketball, and even to a large extent college basketball, has become a game for super-efficient freaks who gallop back and forth, from one end of the court to the other, scoring with deadly accuracy each time they reach the goal and bending over only slightly to drop the ball through the hoop.

Who can account for such tastes? There are even, so I have been told, people who are interested in soccer.

But baseball. I can't put my hands on the exact quote at the moment, but I think it was the redoubtable Red Smith

who wrote about the absolute perfection of the diamond with 90-foot sides.

In spite of some silly meddling, like the abominable designated hitter business in the American League, the game itself does approach perfection. It is the ideal combination of a team sport and an individual sport. A well executed double play is the epitome of teamwork in action. Yet, the classic confrontation between batter and pitcher is head-to-head, one-on-one dueling at its best. And the handling of a hot grounder at third is individual, man, you and it, as is the tracking of a towering, wind-blown fly ball in the deep outfield—and the following throw, not even to mention the split-second decision of where to throw to.

So, we have disposed of any arguments to the contrary. Baseball is the game of games that are played with some kind of ball. I have spoken.

But baseball as an industry or institution leaves a whole lot to be desired. One can only look on with utter wonderment at some of the things grown men, necessarily successful men, do when they become owners of ball clubs



or executives of baseball leagues.

First off, there's the matter of salaries. Baseball, wonderful though it may be, is not essential. No governments would crumble, no civilizations would wither away, if there were no baseball at all (a thought that college athletic departments should run through their thinking processes once in a while, by the way). It is a pleasant diversion, nothing more.

Furthermore, it is a game that 50,000 young men, many of them with considerable skill, would be tickled beyond words to play for nothing but an occasional cold hot dog and some shelter from the storms. For people to make multiples of a million dollars for playing this children's game is tasteless and obscene. Not, mind you, that players should be blamed for taking it, who would turn it down?

The owners, who are working hard at putting themselves out of business, have only their own greed and attempts at one-upmanship to blame for the boiling water in which they find themselves. One of these days, oh let us hope, some owner is going to tell some second-year punk who happened to have a lucky rookie year and is demanding more money than the national budget of some small countries for his continued service, to go jump in the nearest lake and go down twice and come up once. May it happen soon.

Then there's the overall structure of organized baseball. Anybody who has diligently followed the sport knows that God obviously intended for there to be two leagues of eight teams each. Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Chicago would have a team in each league. New York would have three (including Brooklyn, which, it could be reasonably argued is not only another city, but another world). Cleveland, Detroit and Washington would also be represented in the American League, as would Cincinnati and Pittsburgh in the National.

They would be supplemented by a strong complex of minor leagues, triple-A in the American Association, International League and Pacific Coast League; double-A in the Southern Association; and on down to the D leagues, like the Alabama-Georgia league that used to provide professional baseball for Opelika, Tallahassee, LaGrange, etc., as well as an invaluable

training experience for young players hoping to be able to climb up through the different classes to the **MAJOR LEAGUES!**

Then the vicious circle in which lousy teams chased low attendance chased not enough income to buy or develop good players chased lousy teams finally drove a really legendary bad team, the Browns, out of St. Louis to Baltimore where they became the Orioles. And the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee (and later to Atlanta). And Washington moved to Kansas City and later on to Oakland; and another team was formed for Washington, but it couldn't make it there either and moved to Milwaukee (in the other league). And Brooklyn and New York (Giants) cavalierly left fanatically loyal fans to dig for gold on the west coast, ruining a great minor league in the process—and another team moved into New York. And the leagues were expanded, and each league was divided into divisions, and a Little League playoff system was devised, to maybe milk a little more money from TV. . . .

And to show you the type of people we're dealing with here, consider this. When the leagues were divided into divisions (not a totally idiotic move when the leagues got to be so bloated), East and West divisions were formed. Each team plays the teams in its own division twice as often as it plays the teams in the other division, but the fans get to see all the teams, and travel expenses are cut some, etc. There was no problem about the thing. Get out the map, put the eastern half of the teams in the Eastern division. You could do that. Your first-grader could do that. Could the moguls who run baseball? No.

They put, now don't laugh, Atlanta in the Western division and Chicago and St. Louis, hundreds of miles to the west, in the Eastern division. Honest. Look in the sports pages. They can almost compete for geography honors with the National Football League, which has Dallas in the Eastern division and Atlanta in the Western. Is there something strange about Atlanta that I don't know about?

The minor leagues? Oh, there are still some minor leagues around. But the teams in them have lost even the pretense of being separate entities with bitter rivalries with other teams in the

league. They are now just out and out training camps for the big teams. Winning games is of secondary importance. They are teaching and learning situations where computer-like coaches and managers make meticulous notes on each prospect's hitting, fielding, throwing, running and pitching potential.

Gone, probably forever, are the days of the ferocious races between the Birmingham Barons, Atlanta Crackers, Memphis Chicks, and Nashville Vols in the Southern Association, for example, and in the similar and higher and lower leagues all over the country.

Pity.

But for all that, and despite the fact that the major league team nearest us is in the wrong division, and the fact that the thought of what the players frolicking about out there are making for the night's play can cause the hot dog to reverse directions, and despite the fact that the regular season, the playoffs, and the World Series should be completely wrapped up BEFORE the first of October. . . baseball is still the finest game of all.

For one thing, as opposed to timed games, there is always the chance, no matter how remote, of catching up, as long as there's one more time at bat.

And there are all of those lovely statistics, statistics that have been kept since this century was a squalling, snotty-nosed brat. They are to be pored over and mentally caressed with each edition of the daily paper, especially the Sunday paper. Batting averages, home runs, RBI's, won-lost records, ERA's (that's Earned Run Average, ladies), doubles, triples, fielding percentages, how many times a throw-right, bat-left shortstop chewed his cud of Red Man with two men on base.

Also, there's something about baseball that is extra-conducive to the creation of legends, certain teams, certain players: *The Boys of Summer* Brooklyn team, DiMaggio's hitting streak, the St. Louis Cardinals' Gas House Gang, several Yankee teams, the truly remarkable ineptness of the St. Louis Browns—and the fact that they actually won the pennant in 1944 (thanks to the draft, which tended to equalize things)—and had a book written about them many years later, a delicious book called *Even The Browns*.

Baseball has been the inspiration for





works of art, too. One that comes to mind immediately is the play and movie, "Damn Yankees." And the epic poem, "Casey at the Bat." And especially short stories.

One reason is that a lot of writers who later became famous for other things got their starts pounding out daily stories about their town's baseball team for the local paper. People like Ring Lardner and Paul Gallico; and James Thurber wrote a baseball short story landmark called "You Could Look it Up." And so on and so forth.

etching by Theresa Barnett

And the grind of doing those daily stories brought forth a tortured style of prose which has, let us give thanks, about disappeared, but can still be seen or heard occasionally.

Among the more pedestrian writers, the ones who did not go on to greater things, such terms as "twirling staffs" for pitching staffs and "corralling the leather" for catching the ball were regularly used. And the swatsmen pounded the leather (or the leather-covered pill). Listen. "It was quite a day with the wil- low for the Sportsman's Park lads, who

for the most part of the season have been far down in the swatfest column." Fellow named Glen Wallar wrote that and reams of similar copy for the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*. He was not atypical for that time—that momentarily warped time when even the Browns could be in contention for the American League pennant.

Baseball is a game you can love without even seeing. After Uncle Kelley explained to me the shorthand in the boxscores, I used to linger over them, ponder them, meditate about them, memorize them, first in the *Age-Herald* at Grandma's house, where I was deposited by the school bus, then further still in the *Post* at our house.

It would be many, many years in the future before I would actually see a professional game, even a minor league game. But I knew that a couple of big league players had come from my home town, Guy Morton of the Morton's Mill Mortons (he drank, they said), a pitcher with Cleveland several years earlier; and Terry Moore (of Moore's Mill Moores), who played with my team (except for my natural underdog pulling for the Browns), the Cardinals.

If you wanted to know anything about Mort or Walker Cooper or Howie Pollet, or Harry the Cat or Ray Sanders or Whitey Kurowski or Marty Marion or Enos or Stan, oh, pray, just ask!

It's the kind of game you can love, leisurely, at your own pace, but deeply; in spite of the spoiled, grotesquely overpaid whiners (not all, of course) who play it, in spite of the lawyers who seem bent on closing it down, and the messed up leagues, and the stretching of a strictly warm-weather game into the frosty heart of winter. . . .

It is still THE game.

Take me out to it. Or I'll read about it, and love it just as much. C





*lithograph by Marty Joseph*

### **The Elizabethan Brush-Off**

Have I known you since only yesterday?  
 It seems to me as if whole weeks have passed.  
 Or even more, that time from March to May,  
 When in the length of Spring new blooms grow fast.  
 While Summer it is not, it soon could be,  
 When, like the sun, our love would reach its height.  
 And as it lingered there (for all to see)  
 Our days would grow, as do the sun's, most bright.  
 But who can stay the cyclic fate of love?  
 By Nature's right all things must meet their end.  
 To earth Autumnal gales do beat the dove  
 And hawk-like Winter guts the warmth therein.  
 Alas, our love, though lit fresh from its mold,  
 Must be snuffed out, that it never grow cold.

**Steve Alexander**

**Honorable Mention Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest**

### **Poignant**

A girl  
 In a March green army jacket;  
 Bending over to pick up a feather  
 In the dirt.

**William David Hartshorn**

### **Katy-dids**

All of those yellow-haired girls.  
 I sent a flower to one once.  
     She chewed it . . .  
         ever so slowly,  
 twitched her bony legs in delight.  
     Then I found out—  
     she's exoskeletal—  
 and I had to start all over again.

**Robert J. LoTufo**



### fill in the airships with told colours.

i don't live in the pretty how town,  
with nobody and anybody and the congregation that approved,  
the fallout.  
"almost," do you know that word well?  
we were almost in love—(we were also "almost" dead or  
kings or negro eskimoes) . . . either the ingredients were  
sparse or merely unimaginative.

i don't live in the pretty how town,  
with mortal stench and passion and deathly memorabilia.  
nobody doesn't exist (anybody could see).  
the face which launched a thousand ships,  
sunk twice that number.

i have damned the mirror, the questions still unanswered,  
i have known the moods of verbs, only to see them die.  
i have seen the rain on the window, brought on by the storms.  
storms which blow the breath of young men into their stomachs,  
storms which melt the remains of the bitter stage of Jaques,  
storms which would not kneel to mr. einstein or you or my  
first person narrator . . . .

i don't live in the pretty how town,  
with "ifs" and "buts" and lusting hearts,  
which bleed and burn at the mention of some lover's name,  
burning bones and flesh—do they burn or do they fade,  
dust to dust.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

James A. Vines

### 2nd Place Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest

#### Passover

Seven days and still counting,  
The Pharisees have moved to Main Street.  
Under the Kibbutz kitchen aids,  
*Mein Kampf* burns.

The next-in-line for Biblical expeditions,  
Gideon, with his lamps ablaze,  
Marched off into the desert with nary an  
Anti-aircraft barrage.

Passover.

Those who found the scrolls,  
Live in small bungalows near Tel-Aviv,  
My generation in Israel.  
Twist and shout.

James A. Vines

### A Trifle

I decided not to worry about it—  
This coffee pot failed  
I took its entrails out and  
Looked at its wires that had  
Made it hot  
And decided I did not understand

Then I remembered the German soldier  
I had shot souls ago on the beach at Anzio  
He fell slowly groundward like a ghost when  
I pulled the trigger.  
He was so far away from my finger when  
He died that I can not remember now  
How his face was  
There was for me, afterward  
Neither praise nor condemnation  
It was inventory  
I, with all the others, ate my rations  
Later got my badge, and ribbon too  
But that was seas and skys ago

And now this coffee pot . . .

Oxford Stroud

### Plane Crash Over the Potomac

The mere presence of words  
On paper  
Breaks the spell.  
Ice  
Like glass — cold and white —  
Suspension of time — motion — sound —  
No sound — terrible silent roar.  
And the hustle and the scurry above and the shouts  
And the orders and the sound of the blades  
As they hover and the men running and crawling and  
Digging and the wind as it blows across  
The snow and the city sounds  
And the sirens and the reporters and the lights  
Flashing and the smells of winter and the sounds  
Of heavy breathing in the winter air and under the ice —  
Nothing.  
Not far — but so far.  
Seeing — but blinded.  
Living — but very  
Very  
Dead.

Terri Elliott

Honorable Mention Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest    Honorable Mention Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest





## “But That’s Not What I Said!”

*by Keith Ayers and Karen Kirkpatrick*

Misrepresentation. The word lurks in the back of the mind of every person who has even spoken to the press about anything of importance.

To the careful journalist, it is the eighth deadly sin, perhaps the greatest occupational hazard. A colossal error could cost a reporter his reputation or his job, while smaller errors, even the seemingly inevitable ones, can threaten his self esteem and cloud his peace of mind.

To the news source, the threat of misrepresentation is a temptation to remain silent. Though the public has the “right to know,” the source may reason that no news is better than distorted news. Thus “no comment” or “unavailable for comment” find their way into news columns even when the source has nothing to hide.

Misrepresentation takes many forms. It can be a blatant misquotation. It can be a reporter’s inaccuracy or misunderstanding of a source’s information. It can be alteration of meaning as a result of paraphrasing.

Or misrepresentation can be of other

origins. It can be a simple technical error that turns \$1.5 million into \$15 million. It can be the dropping of a key qualifier that can mean the difference between day and night, or right and wrong. Misrepresentation can be hastily edited quotations that alter meaning and muffle otherwise freely speaking sources.

From the time that news was chipped out on tablets of stone, inaccuracies and diversions from the facts have pes-

*photograph by Patti Hudson*



tered the journalist and consequently angered the parties involved. Auburn University and the surrounding community aren't exceptions. For here, where news of local, state and national significance is made, misrepresentation creeps into the news media. An informal survey of local newsmakers bears this out.

Responding to our survey, Sports Information Director David Housel complained of being misquoted by a reporter from a major Alabama daily paper. When asked in 1981 if the football coach Doug Barfield would be fired, Housel responded, "Some people say where there is smoke, there is fire."

But the reporter quoted Housel as saying only, "Where there is smoke, there is fire."

"This changed the meaning of what I said by 180 degrees," Housel complained. "It was the exact opposite of what I meant."

A fragmented quotation also caused Kaye Lovvorn, editor of the *Auburn Alumnews*, some embarrassment.

Speaking to a student journalist on the topic of university research, Lovvorn said, "Auburn will never be the Harvard of the South, but it could become the M.I.T. of the South."

The quote appeared in the *Plainsman* as "Auburn will never be the Harvard of the South."

Lovvorn says the deletion of the second part of the quotation made quite a difference.

The dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine, J.T. Vaughan, was reported in a major professional journal as saying that the Auburn vet school needed an additional \$15 million to hire personnel. What Vaughan said, in truth, was that Auburn needed \$1.5 million.

"I considered it a typo, but a significant one since distribution was nationwide," Vaughan said.

Director of Student Housing, Gail McCullars says she has had her problems with misrepresentation also.

"My experience has been that most reporters attempt to be accurate but I have questioned, at times, the objectivity of some. A case in point would be a

reporter with a personal issue with campus housing conducting the interview," McCullars said.

Charlotte R. Ward, an associate professor of physics and a City Council member says she was misquoted in a write-up of a December council meeting.

"I commented that multiple dwellings were appropriate for the East Glenn-Summerhill area but that I would not vote for rezoning until street widening alleviated an already dangerous traffic situation." The next day, a local paper quoted Ward as saying "apartments are not appropriate."

Ward says this was just the most recent error in her experience with the press. She says that paraphrasing results in subtle changes in meaning that can hurt the story's accuracy.

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*The problem of misrepresentation can often be traced to an "overworked, underpaid or untrained reporter," Johnson said. Working under deadline pressure also accounts for errors, he said.*

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Gerald Johnson, head of the political science department, was the victim of an inaccurate headline when he was serving as a consultant to the government of a central Alabama city considering a merit system for city employees.

Johnson explained, "After meeting with city employees, I met with the press and stated that the city was not ready for a fully developed civil service merit system. Rather, I said the city needed an in-house employee system."

The next day, a newspaper carried a story with headlines stating that Johnson was opposed to merit plans for city employees.

The problem of misrepresentation can often be traced to an "overworked, underpaid or untrained reporter," Johnson said. Working under deadline pressure also accounts for errors, he said.

Robert V. Andelson, professor of philosophy, said he was misrepresented during the time of Dr. Hanly Funderburk's becoming president of Auburn

University.

Andelson said he told a reporter for a local paper that he "respected Professor Donald Vives," although he "opposed Vives' University Senate Resolution welcoming Dr. Funderburk as Auburn's new president."

The next day, Andelson was quoted as saying he "respected Dr. Funderburk."

Finally, perhaps the most volatile example of misrepresentation was given by a faculty member who wished to remain anonymous.

It seems the faculty member had been active in the campaign of a certain gubernatorial candidate, and had encouraged other faculty members below him to donate money to the campaign. After being advised that some might misinterpret his campaigning as a threat to academic freedom, the faculty member quit soliciting funds.

When questioned by a reporter of a major Alabama daily, the faculty member said he was no longer soliciting money but had donated money himself.

But the paper said the faculty member denied donating money to the campaign altogether.

"This would have been senseless to deny," the faculty member explained, "because the money could easily have been traced."

The misquotation had two major ramifications, the faculty member said. First, it made him look as if he were denouncing support of the candidate. Secondly, it made it look as if there had been some sort of cover-up, when indeed the faculty member admitted donating money.

Obviously, misrepresentation is a problem. But it is a problem that has two sides. In a business where billions of words are put on newsprint daily, reporters and sources will make mistakes. In fact, some observers speak of an inevitable "margin of error."

Dick Parker, former editor of the *Auburn Bulletin*, says there are two communication gaps that can cause errors in newswriting. One gap lies between the source and the reporter, and the other lies between the reporter



and the reader.

"Sometimes we have to interpret what a source tells," he explained. "We may need to paraphrase to make it clear to the reader, and in doing so we run the risk of altering meaning.

"Excluding certain information that the reader doesn't know, but the reporter assumes the reader knows, can result in misinterpretation," Parker says.

Jack Simms, head of the journalism department, says the number of stories to be written and the speed in which they must be prepared makes some errors inevitable.

Though he has been misrepresented several times, Simms keeps a cool head. "I expect almost every story to contain some errors, most of them insignificant," he said.

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*"I expect almost every story to contain some errors, most of them insignificant."*

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According to Simms, carelessness and inexperience account for most instances of misrepresentation. Some reporters are poorly prepared to cover the events they are assigned, he explains "but I don't think one reporter in 50,000 misquotes intentionally."

Dan Holsenbeck, director of University Relations at Auburn, says one of his office's greatest problems is the misinterpretation of "hard institutional data" by the press. He says the press sometimes gets data that isn't exact because sources, faculty members for instance, don't have the correct figures in hand.

This was the crux of a recent controversy around Holsenbeck's office. The director was working on a policy to advise faculty members to check with his office to verify "hard institutional data" to be given to the press. His goal, he says was to keep the press from getting incorrect data.

Many faculty members and press people saw this action as a sanction. Still, Holsenbeck contends his goal was to keep the data correct to avoid conflicting reports. He wanted to leave many such data-related questions to be answered by the Office of Institutional Analysis, the storage bank for pertinent facts and figures about the University.

"The thought of a person in my relationship to the press doing such a thing as this [sanctioning news] is professionally insulting," Holsenbeck told *The Circle*.

Neil O. Davis, founder of the *Auburn Bulletin* and editor for 38 years, says misrepresentation must be combatted at the reporting level.

Davis emphasizes the need for taking good notes and not being hesitant to call back to clarify a point of confusion.

Davis also noted that the reporter must develop a good interviewing technique.

"Putting the interviewee at ease makes the atmosphere comfortable so that the facts can be told clearly," Davis said.

It's not surprising that some people who are frequently quoted in the press have their own pet ways of avoiding misrepresentation.

Dean J. Michael Sprott of the Extension Service says that he systematically slows down and "repeats responses" and usually asks the reporter to read back his notes, especially where data is being discussed.

Charlotte Ward, City Council member, says she always writes out statements that need to be guarded against misrepresentation, the same procedure used by Vice President of Agriculture Stanley P. Wilson.

Dean Keith McPheeters of the School of Architecture and Fine Arts says he doesn't grant interviews unless he is sure the reporter is "competent" and "well-intentioned." He says he avoids "unexperienced student reporters doing a story as part of a class assignment."

Delos McKown, head of the philosophy department, says he usually

makes a tape of all interviews for his own files as a defense against misrepresentation.

Caine Campbell, assistant dean in the School of Arts and Sciences, says he avoids being misrepresented by contemplating beforehand the questions a reporter might ask. He then makes up categorical answers to key questions and mentally prepares them so he can better convey his ideas to the reporter. Interestingly enough, Campbell was a journalist before taking his job at Auburn.

In the end, one can see that as long as there is a free press, there will be mistakes. The burden of keeping misrepresentation to a minimum, then, lies on both the journalist and the source, as well as on all other persons involved in the production and distribution of the

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*"Putting the interviewee at ease makes the atmosphere comfortable so that the facts can be told clearly," Davis said.*

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news.

As Walter Williams, writer of the "Journalist's Creed" so aptly put it, the question is a matter of trust. Says Williams:

"The public journal is a public trust, and all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public. Acceptance of a lesser service than the public trust is betrayal of this trust."





*photograph by Donna Waldrop*

### **Irascible**

Rackety laughter fills my head,  
Bangs and clangs, and will not leave;  
Restless, I seek the wood.

Dry leaves crackle, crumple;  
Like a phalanx crashing,  
Ankle deep I invade the wood.

Ratta, ratta, ha, ha, ha—  
A wicked jay announces me;  
Watchful sentry alarming the wood.

Turning sideways to see me straight,  
He aims one bird-eye at my head,  
Ratta, ratta, and flies away.

Toeing aside leaves and straw,  
I squat, brush at the beetles  
Before I sit down.

One soundless doe slacks behind.  
Hollow, a twig snaps;  
Specter-shy, she is gone.

Grey squirrel chortles in the wood,  
Whippoorwill mewls in gloom;  
The thin whine of an insect sounds.

Pugnacious jay shrills his slander;  
Irkesome laughter from men and squirrels—  
Serenity eludes me.

Fretful, I pluck at crumpled leaves,  
Attempt to batten the mind  
And hear again the Brandenburgs.

**Margaret Renkl**

**1st Place Sigma Tau Delta Poetry Contest**



# PRISON VIOLENCE — A WAY OF LIFE

*The story of M.H. Halbert as told to Patrice S. O'Gwynn*

*"M.H. Halbert" was arrested and convicted on charges of first degree burglary and attempted murder. He requested that his real name not be used.*

I hesitate to speak about the violence I observed, experienced and participated in during my seven years of incarceration in Alabama's jails and prisons.

I don't hesitate out of a reluctance to remember or out of shame.

I hesitate because I resent the exclamations of horror and the intense curiosity my stories inevitably bring. Rationally I understand these reactions, but at the same time I know that they are ultimately ineffectual and mark my experiences with prison violence as mere sensationalism.

*Webster's Dictionary* defines the word "sensational" as that "relating to sensation or to the senses." Constant exposure to violence deadens the senses.

Sensational material, Webster says, "arouses a quick, intense and usually superficial interest, curiosity or emotional reaction." Listening to tales of another's experiences often conjures within the listener fantasies of heroic behavior and rich reward. Living the experience, however, is a different matter.

The amount and types of violence I saw in prison disgusted me, and time refused to allow this miserable situation to pass quickly. I was bored. Such a lifestyle is commonplace for the inmate.

Nor is prison violence sensational as applied to its third meaning—that which is "exceedingly or unexpectedly excellent or great." Very few inmates enjoy the violence which dominates their environments. I didn't.

Perhaps after reading my account of life on the seventh and eighth floors of the Jefferson County Jail and in the Draper Correctional Center, the reader will understand why I prefer to



analyze the causes and effects of prison violence instead of describing rape after rape, beating after beating.

My cell on the seventh floor of the Jefferson County Jail was approximately six feet by twelve feet. It was designed to house four people, but at times it housed six, leaving the extra two inmates to sleep on the floor.

On three sides of me were walls—

steel walls painted light green. Steel bars completed the fourth side, which was the front of my cell.

Eight of these units plus a dayroom and a walk made up my cell block. I was never allowed beyond the confines of this area.

Three times a day meals were served in the dayroom. The food was not bad. Much of what I ate came from cans and



the menu completely lacked variety—franks and beans, beans and franks—but the food was always warm and plentiful.

A TV sat in the corner of the day-room, and inmates were allowed to watch it during the day and on Thursdays through Sundays until 10:00 p.m.

Inmates who tired of TV could play cards, read books relatives had sent, write letters or bounce a basketball on the prison walk.

The walk was nothing more than a huge steel pen roofed with steel bars. We were allowed out there three times a week for an hour at a time. When I looked up past the bars, I could see the sun, and I suppose I felt like I was outside.

These physical surroundings,

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*Any inmate will tell you that his quality of life is defined more by his fellow inmates than by the physical structure that confines him.*

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although austere, could, I think, be tolerated by most people after enough time.

However, I never got used to the heatless cell and the barred, paneless windows, which lured the winter chills deep into my bones. Inmates were not given blankets so warmth was a commodity only the sun could provide as it moved through winter into spring.

Summer, of course, brought the opposite extreme as the windows that had seemed so large in the winter grew smaller as the sun grew hotter.

These details of prison routine and lifestyle are significant only to the extent of their effect on inmates' behavior and attitudes. Any inmate will tell you that his quality of life is defined more by his fellow inmates than by the physical structure that confines him.

The inmates on this particular floor of the Jefferson County Jail were all awaiting trial for crimes ranging from petty thievery to murder. (Only those consi-

dered extremely dangerous were sent to a different portion of the jail.)

An attitude of waiting characterized these men. They were waiting for their lawyers to call, for their trial dates to be set, for their sentences to be determined.

Consequently, the boredom of prison routine and the lack of activity were compensated for through obsessive conversations and thoughts about one's court case. The inmates compared cases and discussed ways to plea bargain for shorter terms.

There is a brand of inmate called the jail-house lawyer who spends his time elaborating on his knowledge of the law gained, no doubt, through countless court cases and jail terms of his own. Inmates listen closely as the jail-house lawyer pronounces that this offense usually draws ten years and that judge gives light sentences.

Even this occupation could not completely fill all the time in a day. The tension of waiting for a trial date, the boredom and the pent up energies had to be dissipated in some way, and this way was through violence.

There exists an unspoken but always understood law among inmates—a law that says the weak man will be terrorized until he is reduced to utter subservience. These unfortunate men become the objects of the strong inmates' hostilities and sexual desires.

The ability to intimidate is proof of an individual's strength, and it is this proof that prevents attacks on one's own person. Therefore, when a new inmate enters his cell for the first time, he must be careful to hide his fear or belligerent cell mates will beat him for his display of weakness.

Saturday night drunks thrown in jail to sober up were considered weak and often became the bait for a favorite prank on the seventh floor. When the drunk passed out on the cell floor, inmates would stuff paper around his legs and light fire to it. The fun was in seeing the man jump.

Rarely was he hurt, although I remember an occasion when the man's legs were burned badly enough to send him to the hospital.

Violence of this nature is mischievous. The intention is not to kill but to prove superior strength and to pass the

time. Beatings occur several times a day. Rapes are not as frequent, but they happen. Everyone carries a knife although prison rules forbid it. Sometimes a person is seriously hurt but not often.

The violence which occurs on the maximum security floor of the Jefferson County Jail is of quite a different nature.

There are no more pranks. Beatings occur every three or four days instead of several times a day. But when these beatings do occur, they are vicious, intense and deadly.

Every inmate has the attitude, "If you mess with me, I will kill you. Don't doubt it."

Prison administrators and guards

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*When the drunk passed out on the cell floor, inmates would stuff paper around his legs and light fire to it. The fun was in seeing the man jump.*

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don't doubt it, and they treat these inmates—convicted murderers, rapists and armed robbers—in a manner which demonstrates their fear or their contempt.

This type of prisoner is apt to cause trouble if he is discontent, so officials keep the eighth floor heated and make sure there are panes in the windows. Inmates have as many blankets as they want.

Guards don't harass these prisoners like they sometimes do on the seventh floor. Instead they are impersonal and careful.

Gallon jugs of hot coffee are put in each cell every morning.

I remember one morning when the guards were a half hour late in coming to take us to breakfast. Finally they did come, but when we arrived in the day-room, we found our meal congealed and cold. One prisoner announced that no one would eat the food until it was warmed. No one did, for to oppose this



man would mean a fight later on.

The prison officials, not wanting a riot, ordered the food recooked. We ate our breakfasts at 10:30 that day and demanded that our 11:00 lunch be served on time. They brought one meal out after the other.

Although the inmates' willingness to kill bought them some advantages, it also hurt them in some ways.

Recreation—watching TV, reading books, writing letters—was the same as it had been on the seventh floor except we were only allowed out on the walk when our cells were being searched. These occasions were infrequent, and I missed the sunlight and the open space.

Not only was regular walk time eliminated, but also the diversion of thinking about upcoming trials was removed. Everyone knew his sentence and realized that he was going to be in prison for a long, long time.

This sense of permanence relieved the tensions of responsibilities left untended on the outside world, but it also increased boredom. There was so much time that had to be filled and no good way to fill it.

But the biggest problem, and the most significant inhibitor of each inmate's freedom, came from the inmates themselves. We lived in fear of each other.

One day a police officer was put in a cell for raping three women. He wasn't in the cell for five minutes before he was stabbed three times. He had to be carried out.

The slightest indiscretion—bumping against another inmate without saying excuse me—could lead to a fight.

I would lie in bed each night and review the events of the day trying to remember if I had made any enemies who might be planning to jump me. If I wanted to avoid being marked as a weak man, I had to be prepared to fight and possibly kill my attacker.

This emphasis on strength and willingness to fight exists on all levels of prison life, in all institutions. On the maximum security floor, however, the inmates are in jail because of violent

crimes. Psychologically they are equipped to act violently; therefore, the prison environment cannot be blamed for their actions. Perhaps if constructive ways of passing the time were offered, the amount of violence could at least be reduced.

At the Draper Correctional Center, a medium security prison farm in Elmore, Alabama, inmates are given occupations and recreation through which they are able to burn off some of their energies and hostilities. (Persons convicted of capital murder are not transferred to this facility. They are moved to a holding prison where they live in one man cells.)

Every man has a job.

Each morning at 6:30, I went to work on the prison farm. During the summer I picked okra, squash and butter beans. I picked until my fingers bled and my back was blistered from the sun. In the

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*"If you mess with me, I will  
kill you. Don't doubt it."*

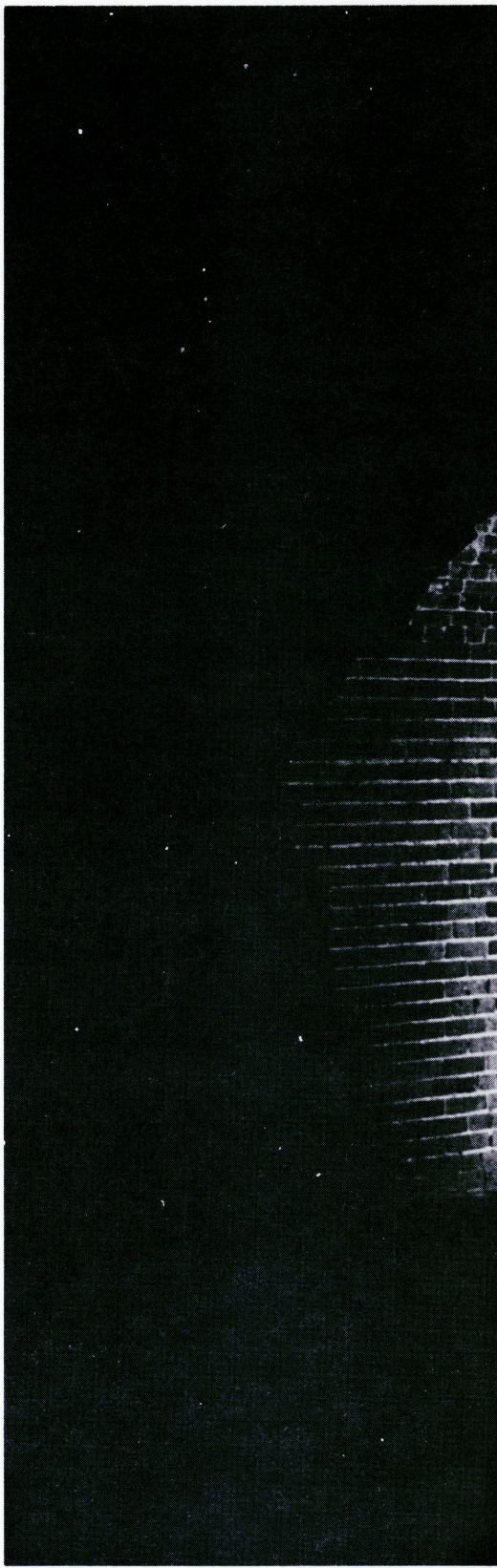
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heat of a July day, tensions would build. Exhaustion from the heavy physical labor sometimes dissipated this tension and sometimes added to it. During the winter, I would dig irrigation ditches—twelve feet deep at times—or clean out the chicken houses.

Not all the inmates worked in the fields. Some worked in the slaughter house, others in the kitchen. The work was hard, but it was better than doing nothing. The work day ended at 3:30 leaving me time to work-out in the prison yard.

The yard was surrounded by barbed wire, and in each corner there was a guard tower. The area was huge, and I enjoyed the variety of recreational equipment available. I could lift weights, run laps and play baseball, basketball and horseshoes.

All of this activity encouraged large appetites, but the food was indescribably horrible. We ate the vegetables from the farm, but often they were not washed, and the dirt would crunch between our teeth. On Fridays, we were served fish which no one ate because it tasted so bad. The package it came in was marked "not fit for human consumption."



The only day we had tea was on Sundays. Every other day we drank water out of bowls because the prison could not afford cups.

We were served fresh eggs though, and there was never any limit on the





amount we could eat. I used to buy cans of roast beef and chili from the prison store to supplement my diet.

In the evenings I would eat some chili and maybe watch the television positioned in the middle of my 300-man cell

photograph by Donna Waldrop

—a dormitory lined with bunk beds—before going to sleep.

Because of the hard work, the time spent outside of the cell and the participation in sports, incidents of violence tended to be less frequent than those occurring in the Jefferson County Jail.

Incidents happened though. The weak were still abused. The strong continued to intimidate would-be attackers. And the cruel were forever attacking and degrading those around them.

It seems to me, however, that the motivation for violence was different in Draper than it was in the jail. Prankish violence and violence for its own sake were replaced with a “I want what you’ve got” type of violence.

An inmate brought another inmate less dope than he had promised. The buyer beat the dealer with a hammer several times. The man nearly died.

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*For everyone in the prison system, violence is the tool of survival.*

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People were beaten for not returning items borrowed—cokes, cans of roast beef, cigarettes. Young men between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were easy victims of rape.

Violence took place when someone wanted something from someone else, and when someone tried to defend himself against such an attack.

One day an inmate who had been messing with me for a long time pulled out his knife. I pulled out a lead pipe and hit him three times. I saw what was coming, and I was prepared. The prison guard pretended not to see the incident, because he knew the guy had it coming.

Nevertheless, of the three different types of confinement I experienced, I found Draper to be the most tolerable place to live. There I had a job, recreation and a little bit of space. Because the people around me also had these advantages, there was less tension and were fewer incidents of violence.

Yet there was still violence. Why? I can only offer my theories. Some of the inmates I knew grew-up in violent environments. Violence was taught in their homes, their neighborhoods and their schools. For these people, violence is a way of life. For others the need to perform brutal acts stems from a serious psychological imbalance. For everyone in the prison system, violence is the tool of survival.

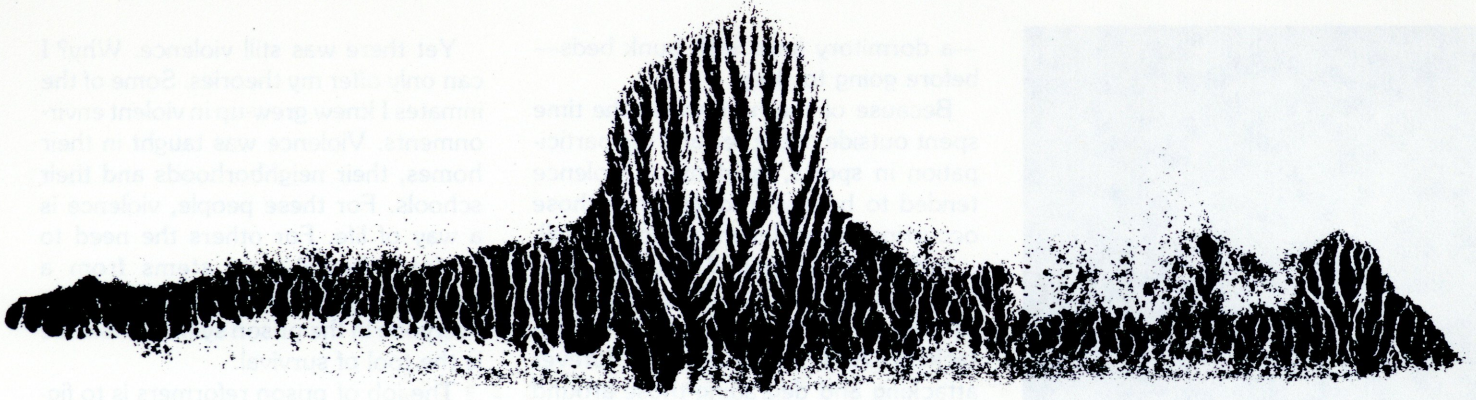
The job of prison reformers is to figure out how that tool can be made blunt and useless. I am not convinced that any method of incarceration will ever reform habits instilled since birth or cure psychological imbalances. There must be a way, however, to allow the non-violent to serve their time in relative peace.

I am not advocating the “country club” prison. Most of the prisons that exist now are not country clubs, but they are not institutions of reform either.

I am sorry, I have no solutions. I have asked you not to read my story with sensation-seeking eyes. I have exposed you to a problem which is dense and convoluted. And I have no solutions.

My purpose was to make you understand what happens in prisons and to encourage you to think about the problems I have described. If I have achieved this purpose, I am glad. Perhaps with more minds at work a solution or the beginning of one will be found. ©





### Southern Winters

While winter dark and winter light  
Converged with feathered border,  
All tried the snowy waves of ice  
And crushed them shoe to shoe.

When silent-soft the white lace trees  
Crackled high ice lines,  
Certain shadows cast on snow—  
Fall fell as sins on hearts

That knew too well, and flakes and flocks  
Curled hurling swells  
With a down rise down and over over down  
Falling, from clouds of milk.

These will be days, these will be days  
Of ice times past spent  
Lying bleached and bitter-sweet-bitter,  
Lying bleached as one

Of icicle points hung dimly cold  
Then running in the sun.  
I have seen better loves since then  
By the white dawn and dusk.

**Richard M. Bolling**

### Cemetery Run

The air flickers like a star in the night sky  
As we begin our circle through the cemetery.  
Nothing breaks through the silence  
But the thud of sneakers and the clicking of my son's bike  
Like a train moving hesitantly along its tracks.

Through the entrance gates we pass a gauntlet of mums  
A row of chestnut trees, their leaves floating past us  
Drifting behind a butterfly the color of charred wheat.  
My son leading, we move across acorns  
Past a group of tall Southern pines  
And a lone magnolia tree.

As we approach the graves  
The trees seem more bare  
As if winter has arrived  
Somehow without our realizing.

We move past  
The modest headstones  
Only glancing  
Casually  
At names.

At times we slow down  
To read a date or inscription  
But we rarely stop,  
For it would break our motion

Almost a perfect circle, like no motion at all  
By the time we reach the hill midway  
We are all motion, as if we released our bodies  
To become something soundless and new  
Soaring and swimming through liquid air  
Rising on waves of wind

Until we reach the gates again, our enchantment ending  
Leaving us slowly like a dream  
As we walk now,  
The cemetery behind us.  
Toward home.

**Michael Pearson**



# The A.U. Directory of Pertinent Terms

**alarm clock** / ə-ˈlarm ˈkläk / n: the loud part at the conclusion of your dreams.

**beer** / ˈbi(ə)r / n: campus' favorite soft drink.

**DUI** / ˈdē ˈyü ˈi / n: "WALK? WHAT STRAIGHT LINE?"

**education** / ˈej-ə-ˈka-shən / n: gradual process by which we learn the magnitude of our ignorance.

**8 a.m. class** / ˈat ˈa ˈem ˈklas / n: chief concern of the student while lying in bed at 7:53 a.m.

**interview** / ˈint-ər-ˈvyü / n: bargaining session in which a graduate-to-be hopes to exchange pretty clothes and a firm handshake for a 40 hour per week paid hobby.

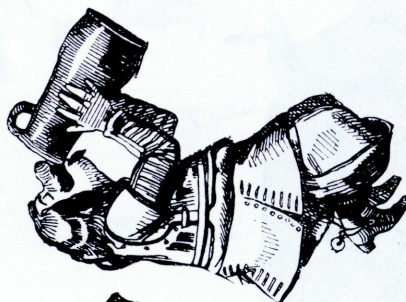
**Haley Center** / ˈha-le ˈsent-ər / n: academic mausoleum structured in preparation for the days when windows go out of style.

**homecoming** / ˈhöm-ˈkəm-in / n: excuse to buy a new dress.

**Jordan-Hare Stadium** / ˈjord-ən ˈha(ə)r ˈstad-ē-əm / n: scene of huge cocktail parties with live entertainment.

**library** / ˈli-ˈbrer-ē / n: collection of sources for tomorrow morning's speech.

**Monday morning** / ˈmən-dē ˈmor-niŋ / n: punishment for evil committed in a prior life.



**party** / ˈpärt-ē / v: to blow it out, to get down, to escape, to get blitzed, to get bombed, to take it easy, to make it happen, etc.

**practicality** / ˈprak-ti-ˈkal-ət-ē / n: any major requiring scholarship and preparing for dollarship.

**quiz** / ˈkwiz / n: gauge for measuring short-term memory.

**roommate** / ˈrüm-ˈmāt / n: candidate most likely to have drunk your last beer, borrowed your economics notebook an hour before the test, and forgot to tell you "he" or "she" called.

**rotc** / ˈär ˈo ˈtē ˈsē / n: recruited obsessives in tribal clothing.

**Saturday** / ˈsat-ərd-ē / n: the blur between Friday afternoon class and a hang-over.

**Sunday** / ˈsən-dē / n: time when one learns of his Saturday night actions.

**telephone** / ˈtel-ə-ˈfōn / n: most expensive of conversation pieces.

**315** / ˈthrē ˈhən-drəd fif-ˈtēn / n: number of points we will score against Alabama this fall.

**typewriter** / ˈti-ˈprīt-ər / n: world's only fallible machine.

**WEGL** / ˈdäb-əl-ˈyü ē ˈje ˈel / n: renaissance in radio.



# R.T. SMITH: ON HAND GRENADES AND POETRY

*By Ruth Schowalter*

Everyone knows how tedious winter quarter at Auburn University tends to be—a maze of overcast days and persistent drizzle, anesthetizing a student's mind, sedating his every thought and creative urge. Through the network of halls in Haley Center, students drag from class to class in nightmarish fashion, while professors, trudging down step after step from offices above, hum their daily query as to what technique might nudge awake their drowsy students. One of these hazy winter nights, Instructor R.T. Smith, clad in worn jeans and a thick heathery sweater which vaguely resembled his salt-and-peppered hair, stalked into his creative writing class holding a hand grenade. Recognizing that the object in his hand had captured everyone's attention, he slid into one of the remaining student desks which were informally arranged in a circle and began to pull the pin.

"The hand grenade was obviously real, and this made us nervous," recalls Lisa Peacock, an English major and endeavoring poet, explaining that, "it was about the fourth week of classes, and our poems were not going very well." She smiles, vividly remembering the incident. "Without shifting in our seats or glancing around, we were intensely aware of each other's discomfort. We had learned Mr. Smith was liable to do anything for an effect."

The unexpected, the spontaneous, the extraordinary—do they have a place in the classroom? According to Lisa Peacock, Mr. Smith's creative and surprising classroom techniques have made a lasting impression on her, enabling her to recall those ideas presented



last quarter. How can a hand grenade serve these pedagogical purposes? Perhaps a view of the man, the poet, who believes a poem is like a hand grenade, will best provide this explanation.

"Rod is a good poet, a working poet, a publishing poet and growing poet," comments English Professor Oxford Stroud who, having an office adjacent to Mr. Smith's, has witnessed his ceaseless pursuit to write and publish since he came to Auburn in the fall of 1976 with a B.A. in philosophy from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and an M.A. in English from Appalachi-

an State University. Any dreamy-eyed, aspiring poet will probably feel a twinge of jealousy at the results of Mr. Smith's tenacious efforts. He has been published in more than one-hundred periodicals and anthologies and has four books to his credit, with the fifth one coming out within the year.

Such productivity deserves recognition, for so bewildering and disturbing is the creative process that most of us file our poetic thoughts away to be written on some undetermined day in the future; consequently, we never write the poem and remain unenlightened



about the stages a poet and his poem must suffer through. Mr. Smith, on the other hand, has blazed a trail into this seductive yet elusive world and explains here aspects of the journey, from the acknowledgment of his own poetic vision, which is changing, to the



actual writing process of counting stresses per line.

"My perception as to what kind of poet I am has changed," explains Mr. Smith leaning back in his chair. "When people would ask me this question, I would immediately say, 'I'm a Southern poet.' My poetry is full of cotton rows, pig jowls, grandmothers and Southern dialect; it's full of things that imply that it comes out of a place that was once an agrarian culture. It comes out of that gothic Southern tradition of Faulkner, Warren and Dickey, where you have a little bit of murder, a little bit of incest,

and a whole lot of barn burning—if not barn burning, house burning.

"That's what I used to say. That was my most immediate concern. I was striving to write poetry that people in the South would read and feel that somebody had captured, in an intense way, experiences that they knew mattered but had never articulated exactly why.

"But, then things changed about the time I completed the poems for the book *Rural Route* (1981). It was not a complete change; it was just a change in priorities. The sociological recognizable South began to fade away a little bit from my poems, and I've found since then that there are poets on the West Coast and a poet on Long Island who write about nature in ways very similar to mine. The poet who is doing most like I am doing is Wendell Berry, who is in Kentucky.

"One of the good things that happens to me when I read other poets is that I am reminded of the things that are most important to me," says Mr. Smith, considering the merits of one poet reading another. "The kinds of poets I like to read again and again are the ones who remind me of what I want to do. In fact, probably, the best gauge I have of whether or not a poet is valuable to me is if reading his poetry makes me want to write, but doesn't make me write like him."

Ultimately, a poet strains to encompass something beyond the physical cotton rows and barn burnings in his poems. "I believe there is some pattern, some rhythm in the universe that is significant and larger than anything that man, in his limited position, can perceive right now," explains Mr. Smith, attempting to convey the ideas he urges into poems. He focuses not on cosmic things, like the movement of the planets or changing seasons, but takes a look at small and particular things. "My phrase for this is, 'lowering the threshold of attention,'" he says. "It's kind of a deistic searching for the principle behind the universe, close to transcendentalism, closest to that practiced by the American Indians, who had their gods and goddesses but believed in them symbolically rather than literally. They knew they were talking poetry when they talked their religion. I think about what they believed literally, just in the

sense of rhythm and order in the universe, and that whenever we get frustrated with what seems like disorder, it's out of a limited view." As an aside, Smith comments, "My mother's mother was an Indian, so I come by some of this naturally."

But how does a poet, once he has certain insights, certain concepts, such as a sense of the rhythm and order in the universe, adapt them to a poem? Mr. Smith demonstrates with the aid of his poem "What Black Elk Said," reprinted here from *Leaving the Bough: 50 American Poets for the 80's*. "The very beginning of the poem suggests to me a kind of acceptance of a cycle. The narrator is familiar with this particular time of year and seems fairly at ease with it. This is the time when the cherry turns black, when they go over-ripe—the beginning of winter. We know it is a time of hardship for him, yet the tone of this whole poem is one of complete acceptance. The elk are hard to find, some of the bands got lost, and some died; but there is no self-pity and apparently no pity for the members of his tribe. Pity is a word that wouldn't fit here. It isn't passive acceptance, because they are finding out that there is something they can do about the hardships they are enduring, a sympathetic magic. Black Elk is not strident about the time; he merely says, 'But that was not a good year.' It is a matter of fact. Then, as the poem ends, he states, 'The next year was the good year.' And there's no verbal exhilaration about that either. There is a kind of stoicism here.

"But the real important thing in this poem, is that at the end, Black Elk is not singing the song, the song is singing him. He is the passive vessel of something that is larger than him, not the creator of it but the translator of it. That's the way I've felt my poetry was; it's always the best when this is going on. Now, there are times when I am forcing it—usually these don't work. But when I feel there is something in me



that won't be held small anymore, I have a need to speak it. Then I think I can make a good poem."

When a poet feels this overwhelming urge to bind his feelings in words, how long does the process take from start to finish? "I'm a sprinter, rather than a long distance writer," explains Mr. Smith. "I've got friends who will work on a poem for six to eight hours, then it is done. I can't do that. My first drafts usually come not at all, and then quickly. It's like something that builds up and builds up and then it bursts out. After that, the poems are real hard for me. How many hours it takes is difficult to calculate because I work on it so many different times and have so many going at any one time. But I think it's fair to say an average poem stays in working form between three to five months before I'm ready to say, 'I think this is finished. I think I'll send it to some magazine and see what the editors think.'"

During the months of a poem's revision, a poet must concern himself with how his words will appear on a blank page and sound to his reader's ear. Mr. Smith describes this aspect of his craft. "A poem always starts out in my mind longer and more detailed than it turns out to be on the page. My revision, for the most part, is a process of compression. I try to find a word that will do what a phrase is doing, a phrase for a sentence, and a sentence for a stanza."

Also sensitive to sound, he reworks his rhythm. "More often than not, my poems start out very close to strict iambic meter. But I don't think iambic meter is a natural expression of the American voice; it is a natural expression of the British voice. I think America has always been a rougher, growlier place, a place where my ancestors as poets are not Shakespeare and Keats but Whitman and Dickinson. What I'm trying to achieve is something of the rhythm we get when we speak, but the intensification of those rhythms. I recognize that when we speak we almost

always use a lot of articles, prepositions, conjunctions—words that don't get a hard stress. I attempt to eliminate those for economy's sake, so that more often than not there will be more stressed syllables in a line than unstressed."

Next, Mr. Smith concentrates on the connotation of words. "The main thing I feel is the guiding principle in my poetry is that it suggests, so much more than it says. And the way to do that is not with generalities, because I don't think generalities excite the mind—but with specifics. The selection of detail means something for the poem. Every detail does, or it's saccharine and needs to go out. If one believes I am deliberate and looks at every line, then one sees that not only does the connotation of the word work into the poem in an intentional and somewhat forceful way, but also that I am conscious of word etymologies and am putting words together that play on one another in interesting ways."


Another thing a poet should consider, says Mr. Smith, is if he has a metaphor, "what is it metaphorical for? I don't make metaphors in the blatant way I did when I was a beginning poet. The quieter the metaphor works its way through the poem, probably, the more sophisticated the poet who is doing it. The flashy, blatant metaphor is useful, but it also has its limitations."

During the process of writing, Mr. Smith continuously extracts the "saccharine" and, like a craftsman, carefully constructs his poem, making sure everything works. "As I revise, I compress and compress, hoping not to tell the reader what I felt when I saw the image or had this experience, but to recapture the image or experience for the reader in such a way that he will feel the same way I did. My goal is not to report feelings but to give somebody else the opportunity to have the same feelings. So, I keep tightening my poems, making them more and more intense, more and more deliberate. And when it gets more and more compact, the object is, that when it hits the reader, it expands again; and that is the hand grenade theory.

"In fact hand grenades, interestingly enough, in WWII were made from scrap metal. The castoffs, apparently form-

less, useless scrap metal, were used to create this very intentionally, deliberately shaped thing which, if you had never seen one before, you wouldn't know what its purpose was by just looking at it. But you would know it had a purpose because it had a design. If you picked it up, you would see how dense and heavy it is for its size. When the hand grenade goes off all that scrap metal is thrown out in a pattern. In a hand grenade, that is a deadly pattern."

It was with immense relief Lisa Peacock and her classmates in Mr. Smith's creative writing class realized this simile was the purpose he intended for the hand grenade. This innovative lesson, free of the usual classroom stodginess, influenced Lisa's approach to poetry. "I think about the idea of explosion a lot, that a thing makes an impact on you by the way it's written."

As the class relaxed, enjoying the pleasure that comes with the realization that certain similarities can exist between two unlike things, Mr. Smith concluded, explaining that instead of scrap metal, "in a poem you've got scraps of your life that come together in some way. Once they begin to come together, I start sensing what the shape should be; and as I do, I begin to make commitments, whether it is to a long line or a short line. But when I begin to perceive what the pattern is, I also perceive what the extended pattern is going to be when this thing goes off. I shape towards not making it fit a particular pattern, but towards helping it fit the pattern it seems to be going on its own." 





### WHAT BLACK ELK SAID

It was in the Moon when the Cherries Turn Black.  
We cut birch saplings and  
packed our tipis on travois  
and followed the Bison Wind to the Banks of the Rosebud.  
But that was not a good year.  
The Arapahoes we called Blue Clouds  
attacked our hunting parties under the Bitten Moon,  
and the leaves fled early.  
In that hungry winter some say the snow reached  
the ponies' withers. The elk were hard  
to find and many of our people forgot  
to slit bone masks and went snowblind.  
Some of the bands got lost for awhile. Some died.  
I think it was that winter when a medicine man  
named Creeping came among us curing  
the snowblinds. He packed snow across their eyes  
and sang the sacred song from his dream.  
Then he would blow on the backs of their heads  
and sing *hey hey hey hey* and they would see.  
It was about the dragonfly  
whose wings wear eyes that he sang,  
for that was where he claimed his power lay.  
We, too, spoke to the snow of dragonflies  
and soon the deep patches melted  
and the hunters brought us fresh meat.  
Creeping left one night, slung on a pony drag.  
Some say he was a man of much crazy.  
I thought so too, but the next summer  
I had my vision of giants slanting down like arrows  
from clouds. They sang a sacred song of the elk  
speaking with the sacred voice.  
The next year was the good year.  
A song was singing me.

R.T. Smith

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# "Oh, You're Just Saying That"

by Claire Silberman

Do you have problems with compliments? Oh, I don't mean with getting them. That's the easy part. I mean with accepting them. If I tell you, "Wow, you look great today," will you (a) glance around to see if I am actually speaking to you? (b) pull out your wallet and say, "O.K., how much do you want?" or (c) smile and say, "Thank you"?

If you fit into the last category and can respond to a compliment by simply saying "thank you," you have a self-assurance that many of us find enviable. We have never mastered the art of compliment-taking and our reactions are often as baffling to ourselves as they are to those paying us the compliments.

Subconsciously, we try to sabotage a kind remark. We chastise the person passing on the compliment by either turning his words into a sanity hearing—"What, me pretty? Are you CRAZY? You ought to have your head examined!"—or we attempt to discredit his integrity and his motives by responding to the compliment with, "All right, cut out the sweet talk; tell me what you really want."

When complimented, I have used the above methods quite satisfactorily. However, my favorite foil is to desensitize the unwitting compliment giver by *telling him everything*. I refer to this as my overkill technique. Not long ago while attending a dinner party, I found myself engaged in conversation with a nice lady whom I had just met. We were chatting away, having a grand time, when she made the fatal mistake of paying me a compliment. "I just love your silk dress," she said. My eyes began to glow, my body went rigid, and my voice took on a strange metallic quality. Clutching her hand in a death grip, I

confided that the dress was not actually silk—just polyester—that I had purchased it on sale for only \$35 and that I had worn it to every party to which I had been asked for the past four years. I was about to add that the shoes and matching purse were not really mine but were borrowed from my sister-in-law, when I noticed that her eyes were dilated and her pupils were fixed.

Why did I do it again? What psychological phenomenon triggers such irrational behavior in me? Well, the experts would have you believe that it has something to do with one's childhood.

In his book, *Your Inner Child of the Past*, Dr. W. Hugh Missildine writes, "Our attitudes toward ourselves are largely formed by the family attitudes and emotional atmosphere of our early childhood. A child develops his sense of being a worthwhile, capable, important and unique individual from the attention given him by his parents. He sees or feels himself reflected in their love, approval and their attention to his needs . . ."

What a revelation! I see it all so clearly now! No wonder I have such an excellent self-image. Even though I was a fat little kid who wore thick glasses and stuttered, I got just as much love and attention from my parents as did my handsome, intelligent, and self-assured brother.

Another interesting theory is brought out in the book *Born to Win* by Muriel James and Dorothy Jongward. They write that people who indulge themselves with feelings of inadequacy are "playing games." For example, if someone tells me that I am pretty and I respond by putting myself down, I am actually attempting to manipulate the person giving me the compliment. I really want him to repeat his remark and reassure me that he is telling the

truth. I must admit that this concept appeals to my intellectual nature, but I hardly think that it applies to my situation.

After the "silk dress" fiasco, I decided to conduct my own research. I had to find out once and for all if others had as much difficulty with compliments as I. For several days I made it a point to pay a compliment to everyone who came my way. Not only did I shower homage on my family and friends, but also I turned it on the laundry delivery man, the meter reader, the exterminator, the United Parcel truck driver and the two boys from the Morman Church.

I told fat people they looked thin, remarked that certain colors were particularly becoming on those whom I was complimenting, admired pearly white teeth, exclaimed over beautiful smiles and laughed at witty remarks. I gave plain faces character, I made short people cute and I made tall ones willowy. Grandchildren became precious, daughters-in-law were devoted and husbands were adoring. In short, I spread joy wherever I went for one solid week.

Practically everyone reacted to my compliments with some degree of suspicion. There were a few straight-out "thank you's" in the crowd, but not many. Most people contradicted my compliments ("You don't really think that this skirt looks good on me, do you? I think it makes me look like a horse.") or made excuses for their appearance ("You actually like this hair cut? Look, she made it too long over my ears and too short on top.") or tried to justify their actions ("Well, I wasn't really in the market for a new car, but I got such a great deal that I just couldn't





illustration by Rob French

pass it up.”).

One thing was most apparent to me during the experiment: all of the people whom I complimented, regardless of their responses, seemed to genuinely appreciate my kind remarks. When one fellow told me, “Thanks, you made my day,” he actually made mine.

In *The Ann Landers Encyclopedia*, there is a section on shyness. It says, “Self-confidence is boosted when we stop saying negative things about ourselves, especially chronic irreversible statements such as, ‘I’m dumb or I’m ugly.’ Instead, we must start thinking, saying and believing positive things about ourselves. We should take inventory of our personal assets and keep noticing what is good, special and admirable about what we are and do.” She adds that shy people are often thrown by receiving a compliment and will usually discount, disown or ignore it. In conclusion she gives the following rules for taking a compliment: Rule 1—Beginners should say “Thanks.” Rule 2—Intermediates should say “Thanks” and add a comment like, “I wasn’t sure that it was my color so I’m pleased that you like it.” Rule 3—Advanced compliment takers should say, “Thanks” and add a comment and a question to make conversation. For example, “Coming from you that’s a lovely compliment since you are one of the best dressers I know. Where do you buy your clothes?”

I am going to memorize these three rules and, so help me, the very next time that someone says something nice to me, I’m going to react like a sane and sensible adult. I know myself far better now that I have read so much material on compliments, and I’ll never again allow one to throw me. If you believe this, then I’ve got some orange grove property up in Alaska that I’d love to show you. . . .



# From the Life and Hard Times of Readers Theater

by Robert Overstreet



illustration by Val Roberts



Dr. Robert Overstreet, a speech professor at Auburn, has given reading performances not only at various universities in America, but also in Athens, Greece, Hong Kong and the major cities of Korea. Courses in oral interpretation and readers theater are regularly offered at Auburn.

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No one can say with any certainty when the activity we now rather ineffectually call "readers theater" began, but the impulse to tell stories and act them out is about as old as mankind, or at least as old as language. It's easy to imagine the cave dweller recounting to his family around the campfire how he escaped danger and killed the beast now being cooked, the mother giving lessons by relating and sketchily enacting fables, the tribesman returned from battle showing his friends how he fought. Perhaps the need to share stories was even one of the factors that encouraged the development of language.

Certainly the need to record stories encouraged the development of written language, which gets us a step closer to readers theater, for readers theater is not just story telling but grows out of literature, is a literary act.

\* \* \*

In ancient Greece, even before the 5th century B.C., two performance activities were especially popular at festivals: choral competitions in which groups presented literature, spoken, chanted, or sung; and competitions in which rhapsodes (individual readers-from-memory—Mary Renault calls them Praise Singers) gave interpretations, usually of the works of Homer. These two activities blended, someone (Thespis?) added an actor (so that now there were chorus, chorus leader, and actor involved in a single performance), and theater was born. It was largely narrative. Aeschylus added a second actor, and theater advanced. It was a combination of narration and enactment. Sophocles added the third actor, narration became less important, and

theater moved toward complete dramatization of story. Humankind's need for narration had to be met somewhere other than in the theater. Of course, in Greece itself presentation of Homer by rhapsodes continued for an undetermined length of time.

\* \* \*

In 18th century London and afterward in other parts of the English-speaking world, a popular parlor entertainment was group reading of plays. In the 20th century when readers theater groups began to emerge from oral interpretation classes on college campuses, staged readings of playscripts seemed to be their natural province. Parallel to staged readings of plays are concert performances of operas. The performers are not in costume, there is no scenery, there are no props. The accouterments of full staging are absent.

There are certain advantages to concert staging of plays and operas. As James Levine pointed out during a recent televised concert of operatic duets, when both performers in a shared scene face the audience rather than each other, audience members have access to what both faces reveal. Plácido Domingo, adding to Levine's comment, said the camera, in such a case, becomes the other character and so the audience member becomes the other character. The spectator is pulled into the scene, no longer observer but participant. A kind of involvement not otherwise possible becomes available to the viewer. Readers theater people call the technique off-stage focus, as opposed to the usual on-stage focus when two characters look at each other within the set. Off-stage focus is a means of projecting action into the theater itself.

Another advantage of off-stage focus that Levine and Domingo mentioned has to do with special demands the technique places on the performer. Without theatrical trappings, without even movement, the performer must convey everything through voice, face,

and muscle set. The concept of characterization takes on new meaning.

But concert staging is by no means constantly effective as a substitute for fully staged productions of plays and operas. It is sometimes useful, interesting, satisfying, entertaining, meaningful, but only sometimes. Not many readers theater people still consider plays to be their special domain. Like quite a few other proponents of readers theater, I feel strongly that except under special circumstances the playscript is to be avoided in readers theater. It belongs somewhere else.

\* \* \*

Special circumstances were factors in an early landmark professional readers theater production. Shaw's *Man and Superman* is a very long play, with four long acts. Most of the third act is a dream in which the devil, Don Juan, Dona Ana, and her father the Commendatore brilliantly discuss many of the issues and ideas of the play's other three acts. The length of *Man and Superman* interferes with the commercially successful production, so the play usually appears on the stage as if there were only three acts—one, two, and four. In 1951 the First Drama Quartet formed—Charles Laughton, Charles Boyer, Agnes Moorehead, and Cedric Hardwicke—and, under Laughton's splendid direction, presented act three as *Don Juan in Hell*. The production techniques were those of concert staging, the results spectacular.

\* \* \*

Nowadays readers theater is likely to use on-stage focus, costumes, sound effects, full enactment of scene as well as narration, whatever staging techniques are needed for effective presentation of a given piece of literature. We have to consider, therefore, what distinguishes readers theater from other theater, for the differences aren't as easy to recognize as they once were. In both kinds of production the director prepares a theatrical and a literary experience for the audience. Distinc-



tion: in theater, the experience the director offers the audience is primarily theatrical and secondarily literary; in readers theater the director prepares a primarily literary and secondarily theatrical experience.

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And what kind of literature is most appropriate to readers theater? The standard response is that any genre is suitable as long as the particular works include conflict, interesting characterizations and insight into the human condition. My own conviction is that short stories and novels are usually the best sources for readers theater scripts. My most notable successes at Auburn have been adaptations of novels—Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, and Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*.

Each of these novels posed special adaptation, performance, and production problems. Mrs. Woolf's deeply affecting story is introspective. Her narrator is omniscient and so can tell us not only what characters do but also what they think and feel. The adaptation problem in this connection was, who speaks a character's thoughts and feelings, narrator or character? My decision was for characters to speak both dialogue and internal narrative. The result was a clear example of an adaptation that was not a dramatization, a differentiation I had to explain to the Woolf estate's solicitor in order to receive production permission. He understood when he saw the script, which maintained the narrative nature of the original, distributing narration among narrator and characters.

*As I Lay Dying* is one of Faulkner's two most experimental novels. The

story comes in scenes narrated by different characters, all of whom have a more or less distorted view of events and meanings. One of the novel's ironies is that the one who sees most clearly, Darl, is the one declared insane in the end. The adapter's problem was to make the narrative unreliability available to audience members. Well, come to think of it, that wasn't so hard. I just followed the performance possibilities Faulkner had written into the novel. Each of his "chapters" is a scene. (The shortest and perhaps most famous is one spoken by Vardaman. It is, in its entirety, "My mother is a fish.")

*The Moonstone* is like *As I Lay Dying* in that different sections are narrated in first person by different characters and that those narrators are reliable (unreliable) to different degrees. Unlike *As I Lay Dying*, it is a long work. Its length and plot complexity prevent an adaptation of manageable duration. Our solution was to present the story in four hour-long installments, one every other week throughout most of a quarter. Our production style was that of radio drama with a studio audience.

\* \* \*

Gwendolyn Brooks saw our production of her long poem, *In the Mecca*. The cast gathered around her after the show, asking her how she liked it, what she thought of it. Wiping her eyes, she said, "Give me a minute." Then she said, "It makes me like the poem better, to see it come to life."

Andrew Lytle saw our production of his short story, "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho." His reaction was, "Why—this adds a whole new dimension to literature!"

\* \* \*

In the academic setting, readers theater is the victim of some strange prejudices. Folks stake out claims to areas and put up No Trespassing signs! Some people—thank heaven, by no means everyone—associated with theater departments subscribe to the view that all things related to perfor-

mance are their exclusive property. Some—again, by no means all—associated with English departments consider everything literary to be their exclusive property. Interestingly (and, unfortunately, not surprisingly) those who speak most negatively about readers theater are likely to be faculty members and students, both graduate and undergraduate, who have never seen a readers theater production. *Territoriality in extremis!* Scholars secure in their fields are likely to have more breadth of mind than such a territorial attitude suggests. At Auburn, I'm happy to report, some of readers theater's most articulate and enthusiastic supporters are members of the English department, faculty and student.

\* \* \*

Even in speech departments there are those who consider oral interpretation and readers theater suspect. After all, creative literature is a cut apart from the common concerns of the territory. Ideally, I suppose, oral interpretation and readers theater would be cross-departmental pursuits, operating through theater, English, and speech departments. Or is nobody's territory everybody's step-child?

One thing is certain: readers theater needs a better name. "Readers theater" is such a dull term that it bores even me, and I like the exciting activity the term conceals.

©





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## Actor Turns Critic

Just another weekend drama  
Recurrent lines and scenes  
But the characters seem weaker  
When viewed upon the screen

"Love to party, nothin' better  
Than the time we'll have tonight!"  
100 proof, great stage make-up  
Drab faces appear bright

Lips are moving, call it talking  
Voices—roaring jet planes—soar  
Runways closed, no place for landing  
Words collide, fuse, crash to floor

Poised, so lovely, always charming  
Given center of the room  
Life-like display mannequin  
Feelings dead, but dazzling tomb

Outside on cold, unfeeling ground  
A young man heaves and groans  
Friends laugh and say, "Just too much fun!"  
They leave him there alone

Love's true meaning in a bedroom  
Hearts of passion sear the night  
Doesn't matter that they're strangers  
Memory's gone with morning's light

Trapped within an empty bottle  
Clear walls, but yet still bound  
Music, jokes, and laughter  
Emerge incoherent sounds

Such a sad performance  
A cruel parody  
Mirror's frank portrayal  
Reveals face of molded clay  
Mere projection without substance  
Spectre of humanity  
Fully conscious, feel betrayal  
Wanting life, I break away.

Marty Cole





PRODUCTION STAFF

Rick Smith  
Rob French  
Betsy Burt  
Randy Taylor  
Amy Korman  
Kimberly Seale  
Jeff Godwin







*photograph by Donna Waldrop*



